

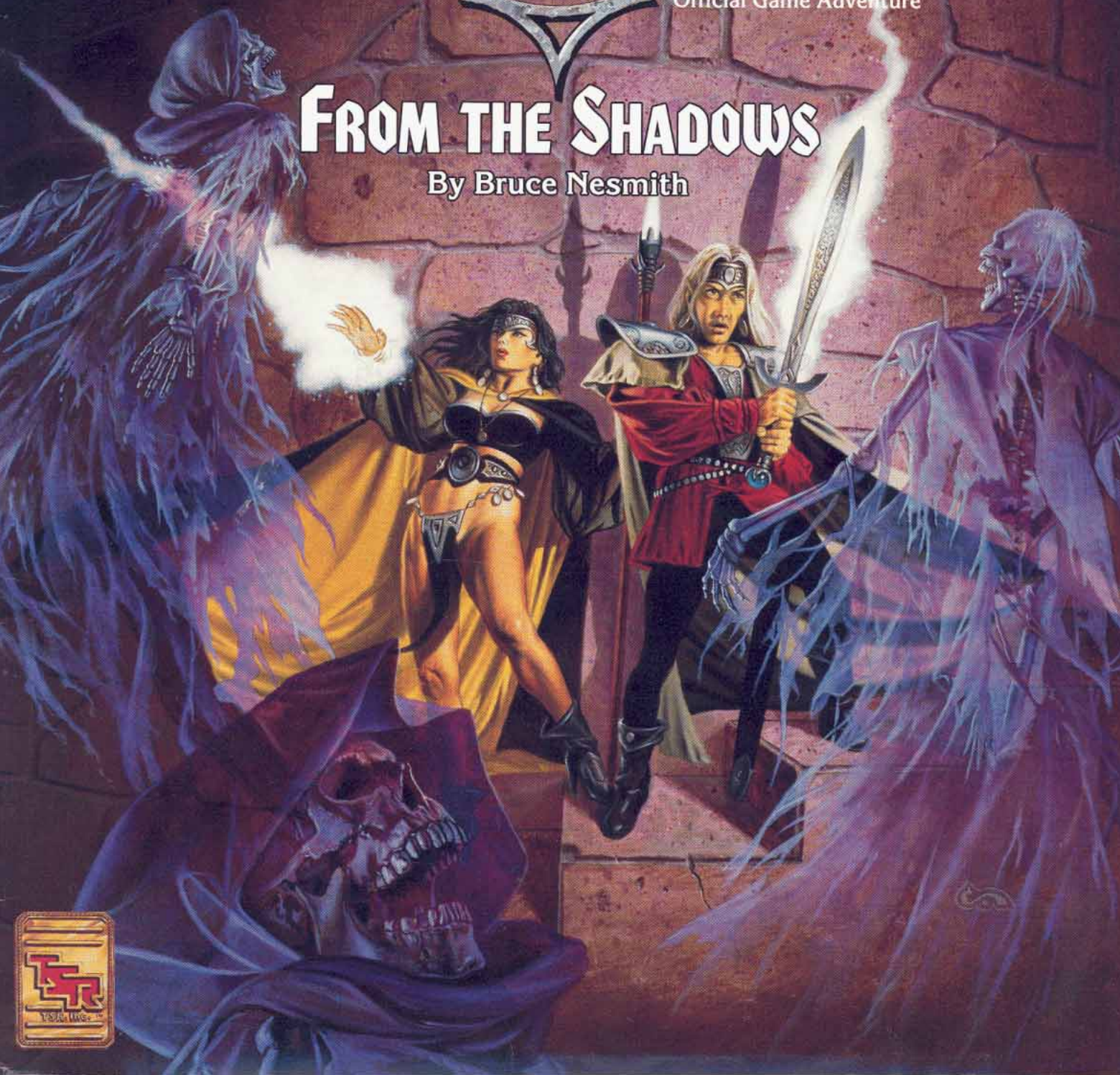
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons
2nd Edition

Ravenloft®

Official Game Adventure

FROM THE SHADOWS

By Bruce Nesmith



FROM THE SHADOWS



By Bruce Nesmith

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GETTING STARTED



The foreboding mists of Ravenloft open their clammy, sinister arms to the unwary traveler. Though you try to escape their cold embrace, it is not possible. The demiplane of dread plays its own game by its own rules.

Strahd Von Zarovich, first lord of Ravenloft, spins his plots in distant Barovia. Nearer at hand, his nemesis Azalin the lich does

likewise. Like two deadly spiders, trapped within their own webs, they dance around one another, waiting to deliver the poisoned bite.

This adventure is for four to six characters of 9th to 12th level. Magical weapons will be vital to their success.

From the Shadows serves a dual role. First and foremost, it is an adventure. Secondly, it holds a complete description of Castle Avernus, the home of Azalin the archlich and ruler of Darkon. Even after the adventure has been enjoyed, this product can serve as an accessory detailing Azalin's castle and revealing many important facets of his existence.

The DM should be certain to read this entire adventure before beginning play. The DM might also wish to review the entries on Darkon and Azalin from the **RAVENLOFT®** boxed set, the *Headless Horseman* entry from the *Darklords* sourcebook, and the passages describing Hyskosa's prophecy of the Grand Conjunction in the adventure *Touch of Death*.

This adventure is the first of two linked adventures. The sequel is entitled *Roots of Evil*. *From the Shadows* supplies an optional ending to allow it to be played by itself. Although it is not necessary to follow it with *Roots of Evil*, we recommend you do so.

Fear & Horror Checks

Fear and horror checks are always optional. If one is called for, it is recommended that the DM allow the players a few moments to decide upon a reaction. If a character's reaction shows good role-playing of fear and/or horror, then the DM might allow that character to skip the check. If a character acts nonchalant or cavalier in the face of horror, then apply the check.

Any player who does a good job of role-playing may be able to play the entire adventure without making fear or horror checks. He will remain in control of his character as long as his character acts appropriately. If the player does not do a good job of role-playing, then the dice will make decisions for him. He must make fear and horror checks and may suffer the consequences for them. It is possible that he will lose control of his character (failed fear or horror checks) for short periods of time.

Preparing for this Adventure

Before beginning this adventure, there are a few things the DM should prepare. Several handouts are included at the back of this booklet. Copies of the **Castle Ravenloft Record Sheet** should be made, and the DM may wish to photocopy the map on the inside cover.

For the encounters within Castle Ravenloft, the DM will need to have several low level characters ready. The DM can have the players roll up these characters at the beginning of the adventure if desired; this will not harm the adventure. Two characters, one of 2nd level and one of 3rd level, should be prepared for each player in the group. They must all be human, but can be of any character class. The characters' classes need not match the class of the PC. For example, a player with a priest character at the beginning of the adventure might play a fighter for the later encounter.

None of these characters needs to be complete. They will be used only for a short time before dying horribly. The details of each

GETTING STARTED

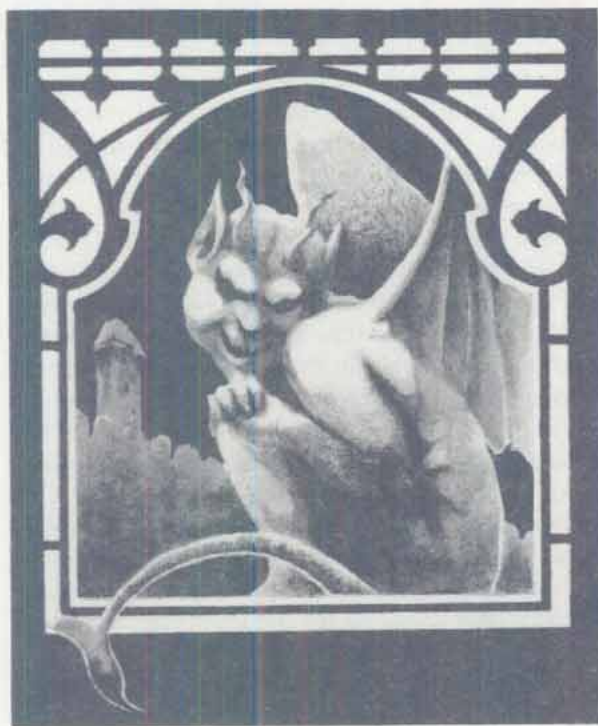
character's class, level, hit points, THACO, AC, and weapon (if any) are all that are necessary. A one-line description of the character's occupation and description will be sufficient (e.g., a fat merchant who dresses in gaudy clothes).

Many of the monsters in this adventure are from the RAVENLOFT® campaign appendix of the *Monstrous Compendium*. If the DM doesn't own this product, he can substitute the creatures shown in parentheses.

Story Background

Azalin wants desperately to escape from Ravenloft. As long as he is trapped within its misty borders, he cannot learn any new magic. This is the ultimate torment for a lich.

Darkon, Azalin's domain, is the second oldest domain in Ravenloft. Azalin entered the demiplane shortly after it was formed and was a slave to Strahd for many years. No creature, living or dead, understands the demiplane better than Azalin.



The lich has decided that Strahd Von Zarovich is the lynchpin holding Ravenloft together. To use this theory, he must first understand more about Strahd's relationship with the demiplane. Azalin needs to examine the first moments of Ravenloft's existence. He has been waiting for over a decade for the perfect test subjects—when the PCs turn up in his domain, without their heads! He will use the PCs to probe the origins of the demiplane.

Azalin deduces that if he can remove the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* from Castle Ravenloft shortly after Strahd becomes a vampire, he might cause the Grand Conjunction to take place. This Conjunction is foretold in the hexad of the vistana Hyskosa. The famous seer now languishes in Azalin's dungeon.

According to the prophecy, when six signs have been fulfilled, the Conjunction takes place, and all the lands of Ravenloft will return to, merge with, or replace lands in the other realms of existence. Azalin believes this will free him of his curse.

The lich does not wish to wait for the conjunction to take place. The loss of the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* weakens the demiplane, making it possible for a single powerful lord to escape. Once that dark lord wins freedom from the realm of darkness, the Conjunction will occur, freeing all of them.

Azalin cares nothing for the other dark lords. He will not wait for one of the other dark lords to escape and break the chains of his own imprisonment. He wishes to be the first dark lord to escape from Ravenloft.

Using the prophesy, Azalin lets the PCs escape. He knows that Hyskosa will tell them of the prophecy and direct them to find Azalin's phylactery. The vistana is blind to anything but fulfilling his own visions. Once the PCs recover the phylactery, Azalin will let them destroy his body, which forces his life essence into the phylactery. When the characters take his phylactery into the mists, he will be freed.



SHADOWY BEGINNINGS

The characters can begin in any realm—Ansalon, Faerun, Oerth, or another. They can even start the adventure in Ravenloft, although the mood will be better established if they do not.

The DM should pick a small town unfamiliar to the characters and find any reason to place them there. A city that was sacked in the last hundred

years or so must be somewhere in the vicinity.

An ancient legend is alive in this town. On certain nights when the moon takes the shape of Death's sickle, a headless horseman rides. All the townsfolk know of this tale, and avoid the old road at night. The old road can be any seldom-used road or trail near the town.

When the characters arrive in this small town or sit down to dinner, they are approached by Soldani. This should happen in the evening, around sunset.

You are approached by a frail, old man dressed in black. He has a long, jutting chin and a long, pointed nose. His eyes dart from side to side, measuring everyone in shrewd, calculating glances. His unkempt gray hair hangs in strands over his wrinkled skin.

"My name is Soldani. I hear that you are brave adventurers," he says. "I have need of folk of might and magic such as yourselves.

"There is a tale in this town of a ghostly rider. He appears occasionally on the old road. I must confess—the legend tells that any who meet him die horribly. But what can you expect from farmers and peasants?

"So, what do I need you for, you ask? I know some things about this ghost rider that the townsmen don't. For instance, I know that he will appear tonight. I also know that in life, he led a mercenary regiment that plundered the city of *(fill in a name of a nearby city)* many, many years ago. He killed his loyal sergeants so he could steal their shares. The last to die cursed him to guard the plunder forever.

"Sounds interesting now, eh? There is one more thing that I know. I know how to find his plunder. However, this does me no good—unless the rider is first destroyed. That is where I need your help. If you destroy the ghost rider, I will find the treasure. We will split the gold half and half. What do you say?"

Soldani is a *vistana*. He is the brother of the famous sage and seer Hyskosa. Such famous lineage has its perks. No magic short of a *wish* spell can reveal when he is lying. The characters can cast any number of divination spells, but all of them indicate that he is telling the truth.

The *vistana*'s true purpose is to aid his brother's prophecy. Like Hyskosa, he has spent his life dedicated to the prophecy. He is old, and this may be his final deed. He must get a group of powerful adventurers to confront the headless horseman.

If the PCs will not go willingly, Soldani lays a *vistani* curse upon them. His eyes burn with venom and hate.

A curse upon you for spurning me!
He without eyes shall see thee die!

The Headless Horseman

If the characters are cursed, the next time they are on any road alone, regardless of the time of day (even in broad daylight), the headless horseman appears, summoned by the

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curse. A cloud passes in front of the sun. Mists rise up on either side of the road. The thundering clatter of hooves is heard just around the bend.

If the characters follow Soldani, the same thing happens, but during the night. The moon is only a slim crescent, like the blade of a scythe. The mists rise up on either side of the road, and Soldani vanishes. The demiplane of Ravenloft has refused him. The PCs though, have now entered the realm of terror.

The headless horseman is completely detailed in the *Darklords* accessory, but is summarized here for convenience. Remember that the PCs are now within the demiplane of Ravenloft when this encounter occurs. All the rules of the realm are in effect. Check all spells against the list of altered spells.

The goal of this encounter is to kill the PCs. Try to make this seem like a natural consequence of the combat. Don't cheat die rolls unnecessarily, and don't disallow character actions without good reason. This encounter is suitably weighted to obliterate them without resorting to heavy-handed tactics.

The rumble of hoofbeats turns to thunder, as if an entire cavalry unit is charging headlong at you. Through the mists you see him—a black rider, solid as yourselves and not the least bit ghostly. Were it not for his missing head, you would assume him to be flesh and blood.

He is astride a great black steed, with hooves that flash with fire when they strike the ground, and eyes that are wild and eerily white. The beast's ebony nostrils are flared, and they blast puffs of smoke. The teeth are bared in a grin, the lips pulled back by the sawing and jerking of the reins.

The rider is a large man, dressed in silver and black. His dark, high-collared cloak billows behind him. His ebony boots gleam in the faint moonlight. His left arm holds the reins, drawn taut. His right arm, raised high and straight, carries a huge, shining sickle.

Viewing the headless horseman requires a mild horror check. Each character gets a +3 bonus. No fear check is necessary for characters above 9th level. They are battle hardened and not likely to be afraid of a lone horseman.

Nothing can stop the horseman's breakneck speed. He is immune to all magic, and will even pass through magical walls of stone or force or similar magic. He is not truly an undead creature, and therefore cannot be turned. He and his horse are one. Attacking the horse to unseat the rider is doomed to failure.

Fleeing is fruitless. The roadway magically twists and bends to stay beneath the characters' feet, regardless of how they scatter. Any characters on horses are thrown as soon as the horseman comes into view. The poor beasts are driven mad at the sight.

Allow the characters a full round to respond. Missile fire and ranged spells will no doubt be their choices of action. If any of these attacks are successful, describe them as staggering the horseman or other effect. The DM should establish the feeling that this is not a hopeless fight. If players feel that it is hopeless from the beginning, they will only become frustrated.

Headless Horseman: AC 0; MV 24; HD 8; hp 40; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4+7; SA decapitation; MR 100%; AL CE.

The horseman's sickle swings with deadly speed and accuracy. He attacks each character at least once before riding on and being swallowed by the mists. If he fails to decapitate anyone on his first pass, he turns around and charges them again.

If the horseman's attack roll misses by 3 points or less, he still causes normal damage (1d4+7). A successful hit means the victim has been beheaded. The *Darklords* book uses a more complicated damage system; DMs with that accessory are welcome to use that system.

Although the horseman cannot fly, and therefore cannot attack anyone in the air, The First to Follow can fly. As described in

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Darklords, during the round that the horseman vanishes, 15 disembodied heads bounce and float toward the characters, cackling and gibbering madly. These are his previous victims, called The First to Follow. Seeing them is cause for another minor horror check (+3 bonus). Anyone who failed the first horror check is subject to its effects again when seeing the heads.

For the purposes of this encounter, they bounce on past the characters, following the trail of the horseman. They do not attack, although the characters should be allowed to attack them if desired.

Heads (15): Int Low; AC 3; MV Fl 24 (B); HD 2+2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1 or 1d3+1; SA tearing; MR Nil; XP 65 each; AL CE.

After The First to Follow vanish, the last wave arrives, called The Last to Leave. This portion of this adventure is slightly different from the *Darklords* entry, in which they are called The Last to Follow. Instead of medusae and maeder heads, this group is made up of three beholders of varying sizes (70 hp, 60 hp, and 50 hp). No horror check is necessary, since these are familiar monsters. However, a fear check may be in order, depending upon the condition of the party. Rather than floating along like most beholders do, they bounce and careen about at a much higher speed. They can also *fly* to chase flying characters.

Do not use the *disintegrate* ray to destroy the bodies of the characters. Their bodies must be intact for the rest of the adventure. The beholders should do their work as quickly as possible, to avoid the agony of a long, drawn-out fight.

Beholders (3): Int Exceptional; AC 0/2/7; MV Fl 12 (B); HD 16/14/12; hp 70/60/50; THAC0 5/7/9; #AT 1 plus 1-4 eyes; Dmg 2d8 (bite); SA eyestalks; SD eyestalks; MR Nil; XP 14,000 each; AL LE.

Once the first character dies (probably from the sickle of the horseman), increase the deadliness of the battle, even if you must cheat a few of the die rolls. If the players must sit around for hours watching the rest of the fight unfold, they will be very unhappy. As each character dies, take the player aside and read the following passage to him.

The world around you fades from existence. Pain and agony shoot through your body. You are disoriented, your vision is blurred, and your head swims. Gathering all of your will, you focus your eyes for a moment. Tables and shelves full of vials, jars, and strange objects are illuminated in the dim light. In the murky shadows beneath the tables, beady eyes stare out at you.

Your body appears to be trapped inside a long wooden box, like a coffin standing on end. Your head is exposed at the top through a hole that fits snugly around your neck. Your body feels numb and sore. Your fingers and toes tingle as if asleep. To either side of you, you see your friends, or at least their heads, similarly trapped. The strain of remaining conscious becomes too great and you pass back into peaceful oblivion.

The characters earn experience points for the encounter with the horseman, despite the utter certainty of their death and failure. Give the party 20,000 XP for the horseman, 500 XP for the heads, and 15,000 XP for the beholders, to be divided among the party members. The DM should feel free to increase or decrease these values for exceptional role-playing or clever ideas. Record their new experience points values on a sheet of paper and save it. There is a small chance that one of the characters will die later in this adventure and regain a clone of the character. The clone will be created at this point in time and have the experience points and memories of the character up to this moment.

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he encounter with the headless horseman deposited the bodies of the characters in the domain of Darkon. Azalin the lich recovered their bodies and intends to use them for a particularly horrifying experiment. He cast a *wish* spell to revive and alter the PCs. When they awaken, they are in the dungeon laboratory of Azalin.

None of the wizards have any spells memorized. Psionics' PSP recovery is dependent upon their bodies; they have no PSPs at this point.

All of the characters fade into consciousness again. If necessary, reread the earlier passage, skipping the last line that describes them falling asleep. Let the characters try to explore the limits of their prison for only a few rounds. In reality, they are just heads sitting on a shelf. The tinglings they feel in their bodies are ghost pains conjured by their minds. The human mind always assumes the most plausible explanation for any situation. It is far more plausible to believe yourself to be stuck in a box with your head poking out than to believe that you are a bodiless head on a shelf. Azalin walks past the PCs a couple of rounds after they awaken.

A chill rushes across you. It is not a breeze, nor a change in temperature. It is the chill of death embodied. You know its cool touch and fetid smell from your years of dealing death to your foes. The eyes under the tables vanish, extinguished like torches thrust into a barrel of water.

A figure walks silently into your view. It is one of the walking dead! The dried skeletal body is withered and puckered. You could count every bone beneath the aged skin—if you wished. The creature wears only a black cape across its back and a burial shroud girding its loins. On its head is a black, iron crown. Its back is to you, and it appears to be unaware that you are there, let alone awake. It stops before the table a few yards in front of you.

Perched on one shoulder of the creature is a miniature gargoyle. Standing no more than two feet tall, its skin is a deep red. It has leathery, batlike wings, a barbed tail, and sharp, twisted horns. The small creature flutters over to a nearby perch to watch.

Each player must decide what to do by himself. If the PCs try to talk among themselves, Azalin will hear them. Ideally, each player should write down a short phrase or action, such as "talk," "break out of box," or "cast a spell." Of course, most physical actions other than talking will fail.

Azalin has revived the PCs and healed all their wounds, but he has kept their heads separate from their bodies. The characters are in control of their heads, but Azalin controls their bodies. If they attract Azalin's attention (or after a few rounds of working at the table), he turns to face the PCs. They see his eyes—glowing pinpoints deep in his skull—and the skeletal cavity where his nose should be. Any character that jumps to the conclusion (and rightly so) that this is a lich must make a fear check.

The lich will talk to them, but feels no need to answer their questions or respond to any demands. After all, he is in control! He will introduce himself as Azalin, archlich and king of Darkon. The miniature gargoyle is his imp familiar. Azalin will identify the creature as a pet, named Skeever.

After a round or two of conversation, he turns and mixes a vile-looking solution in a

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large glass jar. He will not talk to the characters or acknowledge their existence for a while.

Azalin barks out a command in an unknown language. From just beyond their angle of vision, a headless body clomps into the room. It moves with slow, robotic precision. It is the body of one of the PCs, chosen randomly by the DM. All the characters must make horror checks. The character whose body is first seen suffers a -4 penalty.

The body walks over to the shelf and picks up its own head. It carries the head over to Azalin, and gently sets it into the jar. The fluid is only deep enough to cover the neck, and does not rise above the chin. The headless body then places the jar back on the shelf. One by one, the scene is repeated for each character. Azalin prepares a jar, the body gets the head, puts it in the jar, and replaces it on the shelf. When all the characters are in jars on the shelf, read the following passage.

Azalin reaches for a small sealed barrel on the floor, but stops suddenly. "Accursed vermin!" he hisses. From inside your jars, you can see that a large hole has been gnawed in the side of the barrel. Traces of a sparkling white powder lay sprinkled on the floor around it. The lich points at one of the headless bodies and barks, "Get another barrel of ground tooth of faerie from the storeroom!" The body turns and clomps out of sight.

The lich begins to weave a complicated spell before your eyes. Slowly, a long, sinuous shape begins to form. Red and black energy vapors coalesce into a frightening creature. The bulk of the monster is almost 20 feet long—that of a snake, banded with black and red stripes. The head is that of a human female. Greasy black hair hangs to where her shoulders should be. Dark brown eyes glare at you menacingly. As they fix on the face of Azalin, menace shifts to fear. A snakelike, forked tongue flicks out, tasting the air. The smell of rotting flesh drifts past your nose.

"Kill all of the vermin and pests in this room," says Azalin, "and I might let you live. Kill any living creature that tries to get into the storeroom." The foul creature slithers quickly under a nearby table, hissing out a fearful "Yesss, massster." You hear a terrified squeal from beneath the table, then the soft crunching of small bones. The lich's miniature gargoyle dances and capers gleefully at the sound.

"Now my fine, brave adventurers, you are going on a quest for me. I am sending you to a wedding. This is not just any wedding! This is the wedding of Sergei Von Zarovich. This wedding already happened—more than 350 years ago.

"However, there is the small problem of your bodies. The lack of a head is of no consequence to me. Since I have no desire to lose such valuable servants, I'm keeping your bodies here with me. You will inhabit the bodies of some of the wedding guests. You may do what you like at the party, while I watch and learn."

Azalin will answer a few questions at this point. He will not reveal why he wants them to observe this wedding, and he will not mention Strahd Von Zarovich. If the characters mention Strahd, Azalin will say only that he is the older brother of Sergei. The snake creature is a spirit naga, but Azalin will identify it only as his "exterminator."

Wedding at Castle Ravenloft

A partial map of Castle Ravenloft is provided. The rooms are numbered to match the original map (from adventure 16, *Castle Ravenloft*), so don't be concerned about missing numbers. They are rooms on the original map that do not appear on this one.

At this time, the castle is bright and cheerful. It has been decorated for the wedding. The halls are bedecked with ribbons and flowers. Torches burn brightly in all the halls and rooms.

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There are no monsters or deadly traps. Many of the stairs (as noted) are blocked off by iron gates whose locks cannot be picked. If the DM wishes to allow the PCs to explore the castle using the map in the RAVENLOFT® adventure, then these gates still exist, but are not locked.

J. Entrance: The drawbridge and portcullis are in perfect repair and have been left open, allowing for easy entrance and exit. The drawbridge spans a 1,000-foot wide chasm. One guard is in each of the narrow rooms built into the walls.

2nd-level Guards (2): AC 5; MV 12; HD 2; hp 13, 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; MR Nil; XP 65 each; AL LN.

K1. Front Courtyard: An immaculate lawn is divided by a well-groomed cobblestone path. Two other cobblestone paths split off to wind around either side of the keep. Iron rings are pounded into the ground on the north side. A handful of carriages and a few dozen horses are tethered there.

K2. Center Court Gate: The inner curtain wall is punctured by a single portcullis gate, 20 feet wide. The iron gate stands wide open. On the other side are garden courtyards with shrubs, flowering trees, and wrought iron benches.

K3. Servants' Court: Every few rounds, a servant rushes into or out of this door.

K4. Carriage House: A fine black carriage, fitted with tall glass windows and a polished wooden roof, waits here for an occupant.

K5. Chapel Garden: This beautiful flower garden has but a single painted bench, situated to allow its occupants a breathtaking view of the valley of Barovia. Dozens of arrows are stuck in the ground nearby and in the walls of the outbuildings.

K6. Overlook: This portion of the chapel garden provides a stunning view of the

Barovian valley. When the characters first appear at the castle, Strahd is here arguing with Tatyana. She then flings herself from these parapets to the rocks a thousand feet below.

K7. Entry: A statue of King Barov stands on the north side of the entryway. A statue of Queen Ravenovia adorns the south side. There are no statues of dragons here (as in the I6 module). However, there are two guards.

2nd-level Guards (2): AC 5; MV 12; HD 2; hp 11, 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; MR Nil; XP 65 each; AL LN.

K8. Great Entry: The domed ceiling is covered in brightly painted frescos. The dome is rimmed by dozens of carved stone gargoyles.

K9. Guests' Hall: This well-decorated but ordinary hall sports a suit of plate mail in the far alcove. Although functional, it is mounted here only for decorative purposes.

K10. Dining Hall: An elaborate feast is laid out on long tables. In the northwest corner is an elaborate pipe organ. Until Strahd's rampage is disrupted, a musician plays festive tunes on the instrument.

K11. South Ground Archers' Post: The secret door to this room is in a slightly different location from the original RAVENLOFT adventure. A century or so from now, Strahd moves it to set up his elaborate organ hoax.

K12. Turret Posts: Tall, narrow arrow slits peer out onto the courtyard.

K13. Turret Post Access Halls: While Strahd is in his rampage, soldiers are racing back and forth through these halls.

2nd-level Soldiers (12): Int Exc; AC 5; MV 12; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; MR Nil; XP 65 each; AL LN.

BODY AND SOUL

K14. Hall of Faith: Statues line the walls. They depict famous clerics and priests (none are recognized by the characters).

K15. Chapel of Ravenloft: At the far (south) end of this room is a massive, ornate altar. A variety of holy items are laid precisely on its surface. Two items in particular are worth mentioning: the *Icon of Ravenloft* and the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*.

The *Icon* is a silver statue, 12 inches tall and 6 inches wide at the base. It is a noble-looking raven with diamond eyes. It is a powerful, lawful-good magical item. Only paladins or clerics of good alignment can touch it without suffering 1d6 points of damage (3d6 + 3 to anyone of evil alignment). Good paladins and clerics gain a +4 bonus to their turn undead ability, and can heal 3d6 + 3 points of damage to one person per day.

The *Holy Symbol* is also a powerful magical item for the forces of good. Its powers are detailed in the RAVENLOFT® boxed set.

Three priests are present behind the altar. One of them is obviously a high-ranking official, while the other two appear to be his assistants. They are preparing the altar for tomorrow's wedding. None are armed, but all have spells memorized. Unfortunately, the spells are selected for their significance in preparing a wedding ceremony, not battling a vampire.

The pews and benches have been decorated festively. Ribbons and flowers are everywhere. Guests and workers bustle in and out of the chapel, some busy with preparations, some merely curious. This is where the characters appear the first time that Azalin sends them to the wedding.

6th-level Priest: Wis 15; AC 10; MV 12; HD 6; hp 25; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg Nil; MR Nil; AL LG. Spells: *bless* (×2), *cure light wounds*, *light*, *purify food & drink*; *aid*, *augury*, *chant*, *hold person*; *continual light*, *magical vestment*.

2nd-level Acolytes (2): AC 10; MV 12; HD 2; hp 9 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg Nil; MR Nil; AL LG. Spells: *bless*, *sanctuary*.



BODY AND SOUL

K16 & K17. Chapel Alcoves: These simple alcoves are discreet places for the guards to stand. There is one guard in each of the two alcoves. Their presence is mostly ceremonial, and they make no attempt to prevent anyone from going anywhere. When Strahd makes his horrific appearance, they rush from their stations to attack him, and promptly die.

2nd-level Guards (2): Int Exc; AC 5; MV 12; HD 2; hp 12, 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; MR Nil; XP 65 each; AL LN.

K18. High Tower Staircase: From this landing, stairs run upward and downward. The stairs heading down lead to the family crypts. There is a locked iron gate blocking these stairs. If the DM is using module I6 or wishes to design the crypts himself, then the gate is not locked. All attempts to pick the lock fail (the DM should pretend to roll so the players don't feel cheated). Decades later, Strahd replaces this gate with a stone wall.

The High Tower stairs spiral up 300 feet to the highest point of the castle. At the top is a small, circular room barely 30 feet across (not shown on the map). There are no other entrances or exits from the tower.

K19. Grand Landing: This room is at the top of the grand stairs. Frescos on the domed ceiling overhead depict the crag atop which this castle stands. The castle is shown under siege by armored forces on horseback. Strahd is shown prominently, leading his men through the broken gate.

There are two alcoves and two stairways leading up from the landing. Along the walls are a few wooden benches. This is, in effect, a waiting room. Locked iron gates block the stairs, and a guard stands in each alcove. At the top of the stairs is the throne room. No one is allowed in there, and the guards will try to prevent the characters from entering. If the DM is using module I6, then the gates are locked, but can be picked. Otherwise, all attempts to open them fail.

2nd-level Guards (2): AC 5; MV 12; HD 2; hp 10, 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; MR Nil; XP 65 each; AL LN.

K20. Tower Hall of Honor: The floor of this immense, 230-foot-tall tower is a colorful mosaic. The archway that connects it to the Hall of Faith (K14) will be bricked over by Strahd in a few decades. A spiral staircase rises around the interior wall all the way to the top. There are several landings and heavy wooden doors visible at various levels.

The first landing is 50 feet up and has a visible archway to the northeast. If the DM is using the original RAVENLOFT® adventure map, then the doors are unlocked. Otherwise, they are locked and cannot be picked or otherwise opened.

The top of the tower is a circular roof, encircled by battlements (not depicted on the poster map).

K20a. Tower Hall Stairs: This stairway leads down to the kitchen and larder of the castle. There is an iron gate at the bottom of the 40-foot-long stairs. If the DM is using module I6, the gate is open. Otherwise, it is locked and cannot be opened by any means.

K21. South Tower Stairs: An iron gate blocks this stairway on this floor. If the DM is using module I6, the gate is not locked. Otherwise, it is locked and cannot be opened by any means.

K23. Servants' Entrance: This is where the head steward keeps his office. A table here is strewn with books and papers. If the steward is unaware of Strahd's rampage, he will be sitting here, looking quite frazzled, going over plans for tomorrow's banquet.

K24. Servants' Quarters: Important servants live in this room. It contains modest furniture and personal belongings.

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K28. King's Worship Place: This long balcony overlooks the chapel. The two thrones are for King Barov and Queen Ravenovia. The chairs are opulently attired. The doors behind the thrones are unlocked if the DM is using the original RAVENLOFT® adventure. Otherwise, they are locked and cannot be picked or otherwise opened. A pair of guards stands on either side of the doors.

2nd-level Guards (4): AC 5; MV 12; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; MR Nil; XP 65 each; AL LN.

K34. Servant's Upper Floor: This is where the steward lives. He is the highest ranking servant in the castle. His room contains some modest furniture and personal belongings.

Lambs to the Slaughter

When Azalin sends the PCs here, they arrive in the chapel. They inhabit the bodies of some of the wedding guests and castle servants. Roll on the table below to determine the class of each character's new body. Roll 1d3 to determine the level of the character.

1d8	Character Class
1	Fighter
2	Wizard
3	Cleric
4	Thief
5-8	0-level human, unclassed

For any 0-level humans, they merely need names, gender, and short physical descriptions. All fighters are assumed to be castle guards. If the DM runs out of prepared characters, simply assign PCs the positions as castle guards (2nd-level fighters).

The PCs arrive one hour after sunset. The wedding is scheduled for the following day. The evening banquet will begin shortly. However, only a few minutes ago, Strahd murdered his brother Sergei, sealing his pact with the Dark Powers and creating the demiplane of dread.

Therefore, all the rules of Ravenloft apply (fear and horror checks, altered spell effects, etc.) The characters make fear and horror checks using their *original* classes and levels, not those of the bodies they inhabit. However, the results will stick with them long after this encounter has ended.

Five rounds after the characters arrive, Strahd chases Tatyana to the chapel garden and she throws herself from the balcony onto the rocks a thousand feet below. Her screams can easily be heard inside the chapel. The characters have these five rounds to ask questions, get their bearings, and prepare for Strahd's reactions.

At this point, the DM must carefully track Strahd's activities and those of the characters, using the record sheets included in this module. The actions on the time sheet begin in round 6, when Strahd crashes into the chapel (see below). Optionally, the DM can photocopy the Castle Ravenloft map on the inside cover and mark character movements on it. A different ink color for each character will help track them.

By the time the characters see him, Strahd is a vampire. He spends his first round in shock, while the guards pepper him with arrows, to no effect. Then he leaps through one of the stained glass windows of the chapel. He falls just behind the altar (space Q40) and begins a killing rampage. Seeing Strahd requires a fear and horror check. There is little doubt that he is a supernatural creature. His glowing red eyes and inhuman fangs are a dead giveaway.

His goal is to kill everyone associated with the wedding. He starts with the head priest and the two acolytes. The last acolyte to die grabs the *Icon of Ravenloft* and attempts to turn Strahd. The attempt fails automatically, and Strahd bats the silver statue from his hands and crushes the acolyte's throat. The statue flies across the chapel and lands halfway between the altar and the doors (space Q37).

Once the priests are dead, Strahd turns his wrath upon the PCs and others until no one is left alive within the walls. In general, he kills

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one person per round. He will drop whatever he is doing to kill anyone holding one of the holy items. If the characters try to use either item, the turning attempts might work (roll normally), but the *sunray* of the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* does not (a command word is needed). If Strahd is turned, he goes somewhere else in the castle and ambushes the PCs. He might also try to *charm* an NPC or PC to gain control over the item.

For game purposes, the DM should always move Strahd directly toward the closest living PC, killing bystanders when convenient. This puts pressure on the characters to act. Otherwise, they could try to lose themselves in the crowd.

The land has given Strahd a limited amount of control over the castle itself. He can open or close the doors and raise or lower the drawbridge just by thinking about it. Such doors can still be opened with a successful Open Doors roll.

When Strahd sees that the crowd has panicked and is beginning to flee (third round after he leaped through the window), he will stop for a round, commanding the drawbridge to close. Nonetheless, a few party guests will have managed to escape the castle. However, the PCs might or might not have escaped.

The rest of this encounter is a merry chase in which Strahd kills all the characters one by one. The DM should be cruel; none of the players are losing their real characters. As soon as all the characters are either dead or have escaped to the other side of the drawbridge, they all return to their heads in Azalin's laboratory. Give the group 10,000 XP for their efforts, modified to reflect quality role-playing or clever ideas.

Strahd's Powers: Strahd is a normal vampire, as described in the *Monstrous Compendium* entry. At this time, he has no unusual powers for his vampiric age and is not trained in the art of magic. His only unusual power is his ability to control the doors of the castle. His powers are more than sufficient for this encounter.

Vampire: Int Exc; AC 1; MV 12, FI 18 (C); HD 8+3; hp 40; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (fist); SA energy drain, *charm* gaze; SD hit only by +1 weapon or better, *regenerate*, spell immunity; MR Nil; AL CE.

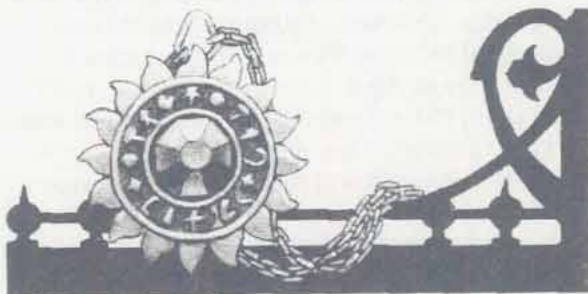
Azalin's Reaction

The characters' minds fade back into their disembodied heads. Azalin is waiting. He magically observed everything that they experienced.

Unfortunately for the characters, he is going to send them back again. Azalin wants the characters to steal the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* from the altar and get it out of the castle. If necessary, the PCs can throw it across the chasm. He will not name this artifact, but will describe it and its location on the altar.

Although he will not tell the PCs this, Azalin considers the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* to be the one instrument that can destroy Strahd. If it remains in the castle, Strahd will keep control of it. In fact, history will be changed if the characters don't get the *Holy Symbol* out of the castle. Once it is out of the castle, Azalin can use other servants to secure it.

Azalin tells the characters that he will continue to send them back to the wedding until they succeed. However, each time he does so, they will lose a small amount of their life force. In game terms, they lose 10,000 experience points. In fact, they have already lost that amount for the first trip that they made. If they refuse to even try (remember, he is watching each time), he will feed their heads to a mind flayer that he keeps prisoner.



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Returning to the Slaughter

Each time the characters go back, it is one round closer to the moment that Tatyana leaps off the balcony. They have less and less time to act. They also return in different rooms of the castle. Use the table below to place the characters in the castle on subsequent trips.

Trip	Rds. Until Tatyana Screams	Start Room	Rounds to Altar*
1	5	K15	0
2	4	K10	3
3	3	K20	2
4	2	K15	0
5	1	K1	4

* Indicates the number of rounds needed to reach the altar at a dead run from the starting room.

The actions of their previous characters are still valid. If on one trip they get the *Holy Symbol* to the doors of the chapel, then they see those characters performing that action. This is the reason for recording all the characters' actions on the record sheets.

Strahd's Uninvited Guests

Once Strahd makes his entrance, the guards, priests, and wedding guests will ignore the actions of the characters. Up until that time, they will try to prevent them from taking anything from the altar.

There is another magical artifact on the altar, the *Icon of Ravenloft*. Although Azalin is not interested in it, the PCs might try to take it as well. If they can get it out of the castle, it will help them in the sequel to this adventure, *Roots of Evil*. Of course, there is no way for them to know this, since it will happen over 350 years from now.

In playing these return trips, the DM should play Strahd to be cruel and devious. He is free

to do whatever he wants. Since the PCs will keep coming back, the DM should have no qualms about killing them again. As a balance, the characters should be allowed a lot of freedom in their actions. Their elaborate and clever plans should work, as long as Strahd does not directly intervene—and he will!

Once the characters get the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* to the other side of the moat, an unknown noblewoman asks for it. If the PCs were only able to throw it across the moat, then she just picks it up and disappears down the road. If the PCs crossed the drawbridge themselves, then the PCs meet her, she asks for the item, and they fade back into Azalin's laboratory. The implication is that the owners of the bodies they inhabit will give it to her.

Rewards

The characters get a lump sum of experience points for getting the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* out of Castle Ravenloft. However, since their life forces are drained for each trip they take, they will probably end up losing more than they gain. Successfully spiriting the *Holy Symbol* out of the castle is worth 20,000 XP to the group. Taking the *Icon of Ravenloft* with them is worth and additional 5,000 XP for the group. These numbers can be modified to reward the players for good role-playing or good ideas.



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The archlich is far from finished with the PCs. With the information they secured about Strahd's origin, Azalin has hatched a plot to get himself out of Ravenloft completely. He needs somebody to carry his phylactery into the mists. According to the arcane texts at his disposal, this will trigger the Grand Conjunction and free him from the

demiplane of dread forever.

Azalin allows the characters to escape from their headless predicament. He knows that Hyskosa will later fill their heads with his vistani prophecy. Azalin arrogantly assumes that the vistana's prophecy can be used to further his own goals. The archlich will keep his scheme on track by not allowing the PCs to leave his castle alive without the phylactery. He has already planned a final confrontation with them at the misty borders to his domain. There, he will allow the characters to destroy his body and send his life essence into his phylactery. Once the characters carry it through the mists, he can reanimate a nearby dead body.

Azalin does not need all the characters to survive—only one of them. Therefore, he does not concern himself with their safety while they explore his castle. If a few of them get hurt or die, it doesn't matter. The archlich will intervene only if the party looks like it will be wiped out completely. Even if this happens, his influence will be subtle. Azalin can command his undead legions to pull back if they are slaughtering the characters. He can leave certain doors open and *wizard lock* others to channel them to the right rooms.

Azalin will not confront the characters until they are about to take his phylactery into the mists. In this way, they have a chance to rest, recover their spells, and heal their wounds. After all, if he is going to let mere mortals kill his body, they might as well have a sporting chance.

Impish Games

Once the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* has been removed from Castle Ravenloft, Azalin has no immediate use for the characters. He orders their bodies to remove their heads from the jars and place them back on the shelf. Azalin then casts a spell (*teleport without error*) and vanishes. He leaves behind the imp and naga.

The spirit naga remains out of sight, hunting down the giant rats that have been eating Azalin's spell components. The PCs might hear an occasional squeal, following by a soft crunching as the naga devours its prey.

At this point, Skeevever the imp decides that it might be fun to taunt the characters. It flaps up to their heads and teases them mercilessly. The DM is encouraged to be as cruel as he can with the verbal taunts. The creature will pull on their hair, tug at their skin to make funny faces, blow dust up their noses to make them sneeze, and so forth.

During this whole process, Skeevever is quite talkative. If the PCs keep their wits about them, they can milk him for quite a bit of information. The imp will answer straightforward questions only if the PCs first do or say something humiliating. For example, it might insist upon being called "your majesty," or demand that they eat a cockroach or some other foul spell component. The PCs can also play the old game of "I bet you don't even know . . . (fill in the blank question)." The imp will fall for such a ruse immediately by telling the PCs exactly what they want to know, just to prove that it is smarter than they are.

Skeevever knows several valuable pieces of information. It knows that Azalin controls their

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bodies through the Zharakim (described below). It knows that in order to reattach their heads, they must apply a special ointment to both surfaces and then place the head atop the body. It knows that this ointment is in the back room (the only one that connects to the wizard's lab) in a green bottle labeled "sanguine solution." It knows that the only way out of the wizard's lab is to *teleport*. It knows that Azalin has other plans for the characters, but doesn't know what they are.

At some point during this encounter, two things must happen. First of all, Skeeve must pull the Zharakim off one of the PCs' bodies—it doesn't matter which PC. This will work most naturally if they start asking about their bodies. The imp will go to the bodies, pluck a Zharakim off a body, and bring it over to show the PCs. It might even decide to rub it on that PC's face just for fun. After that, Skeeve either forgets to put it back, puts it back improperly, or drops it and the naga snaps it up. This sets the stage for one of the PC bodies to be uncontrolled by a Zharakim.

By the time all this has transpired, Skeeve has attracted the attention of the naga. The naga chases the imp all around Azalin's lab. The imp changes shape from a rat to a raven to a spider in an attempt to get away. Just as the naga has it cornered, the frightened creature cries out "sanctuary!" and vanishes. Azalin has endowed his familiar with the ability to shout that single word and be instantly transported to his tower room (room 79).

Zharakim: These strange creatures look like small pieces of a black pudding monster. They are about the size of a man's hand and are covered with an oily secretion. Azalin summoned them from the Negative Material Plane as part of an experiment. When placed in contact with a freshly killed body, the Zharakim can animate the corpse. They have no will of their own and are completely subservient to Azalin. They can be given simple commands, like those used to control creatures such as golems.

Getting a Head

Shortly after a Zharakim is removed from a PC's body, the character regains control over himself. He experiences sensations normally and is able to move about. If the characters do not attempt to move their bodies to discover this, the naga *slithers* between the legs of that character. The character can feel the scales of the creature sliding against his legs.

With one character's body freed, it is a simple matter to have it pluck the Zharakim from the bodies of the others. It takes a few minutes for the other characters to regain control. The PCs will find all of their equipment in place. Azalin did not even value their magical items enough to confiscate them . . . yet. The only exception is that any wizards' spellbooks are safely locked away in the storeroom.

The naga watches all of this with deadly interest. Her instructions did not say anything about the characters. She will attack only to defend herself or to prevent the characters from entering the storeroom. Since they need the ointment from the storeroom to put their heads back on, a conflict is inevitable. The naga is described along with the room description for the wizard's lab (room 2).

As long as the characters are headless, they suffer some restrictions. None of the wizards or clerics have spells memorized. Psionicists are unable to recover any PSPs, and have none at this time. All of the following combat values have a -2 penalty applied: THAC0, AC, saving throws, and Dexterity checks. Anyone attempting to run while headless has a 50% chance each round of running into something or slipping and falling down. For humans and elves, running means a movement rate of 9 or greater; for dwarves, halflings, and gnomes, it means moving at 4 or better.

Quirks of Fate

It is entirely possible that someone will get killed in the early portion of this game. It is up to the DM to decide how generous or

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unforgiving to be with the characters. It is recommended that if one of the characters is about to be killed, the DM should find a way to avert this disaster. Killing a character should be avoided.

Assuming that the DM does allow player characters to die readily, they will need a way to rejoin the party. One potential method is to find the replacement characters languishing in the lower or upper dungeon. Allow a player to role-play a prisoner, but don't tell him that it is going to be his replacement character. If the prisoner is freed, then roll up the new character for him. A good guideline is to make the new character about two levels lower than his original character. Naturally, the new character has no equipment.

If a character dies later in the adventure, close to the top of the castle, privately tell the player to be patient. Eventually, the party will find the Room of Life where clones of all the characters are being grown. There, the player will regain a clone of his dead character to play.

Not all DMs will allow new characters to start with significant levels. If the DM does not like doing this, then he should take steps to insure that the PCs are not killed out of hand. However, letting one of them really die is a wonderful way to drive home the true danger that they face. They will tread more carefully after that.

Hyskosa

Meeting Him Alive in the Dungeon

The lone vistana in the lower dungeon is Hyskosa, the famous vistani seer. Most vistani seers are women. Hyskosa is a notable exception to this rule. He is also the most powerful vistani seer ever to live. He predicted the Grand Conjunction that would affect all the domains of Ravenloft. His vision of the future was written down as a hexad of cryptic lines.

Hyskosa has waited in this cell for years for the characters to arrive. He can sense the tangled branchings of the future as possibilities become realities. He knows exactly when Azalin

captures them, and knows when they make their escape. He knows that they hold the key to fulfilling his vision of the future. He can sense whether the characters choose a future that does not lead them to his cell. If they pass his cell and make it to the next level of the castle, Hyskosa wills himself to die. For this great seer, his personal death is secondary to his prophecy. He then approaches the characters as a ghostly spirit when they reach the gallery (see below).

When the characters first see him in the dungeon cell, he looks disturbingly familiar to them. This is because they have met his brother Soldani previously. Each character who declares to be studying Hyskosa's face can make an Intelligence check with a -2 penalty. If successful, the character makes the connection.

Azalin has been torturing Hyskosa mentally to discover everything possible about the Grand Conjunction. The vistana seer has been waiting for the rescuers his own prophecies foretold.

Hyskosa is sitting calmly in his cell when the PCs first see him. When the PCs step up to his cell, he quotes his own prophecy of the Grand Conjunction to them.

"I am Hyskosa, sage and seer of the Vistani. Listen closely and heed my warning. . . ."

"The night of evil shall descend on the land
When this hexad of signs is near at hand.

"In the house of Daegon the sorcerer born,
Though life, unlife, unliving shall scorn.

"The lifeless child of stern mother found
Heralds a time, night of evil unbound.

"Seventh time the son of suns doth rise
To send the knave to an eternity of cries.

"The light of the sky shining over the dead
shall gutter and fail, turning all to red.

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"The bodiless shall journey to the time before
Where happiness to hate creates land and lore.

"Inajira will make his fortunes reverse
Dooming all to live with the dreaded curse.

"Know thee now that the circle is complete,
What lust hath made, history shall repeat."

Most of these verses have been discussed in previous RAVENLOFT® adventures. The first pair of lines refers to *Feast of Goblyns*, the second pair to *Ship of Horror*, the third pair to *Touch of Death*, and the fourth pair to *Night of the Walking Dead*. The fifth pair refers to this adventure; the PCs are the bodiless, since they lost their heads. They journeyed into the past (the time before) to see Strahd turn a wedding into a massacre (happiness to hate). This act somehow created the demiplane of Ravenloft (land and lore).

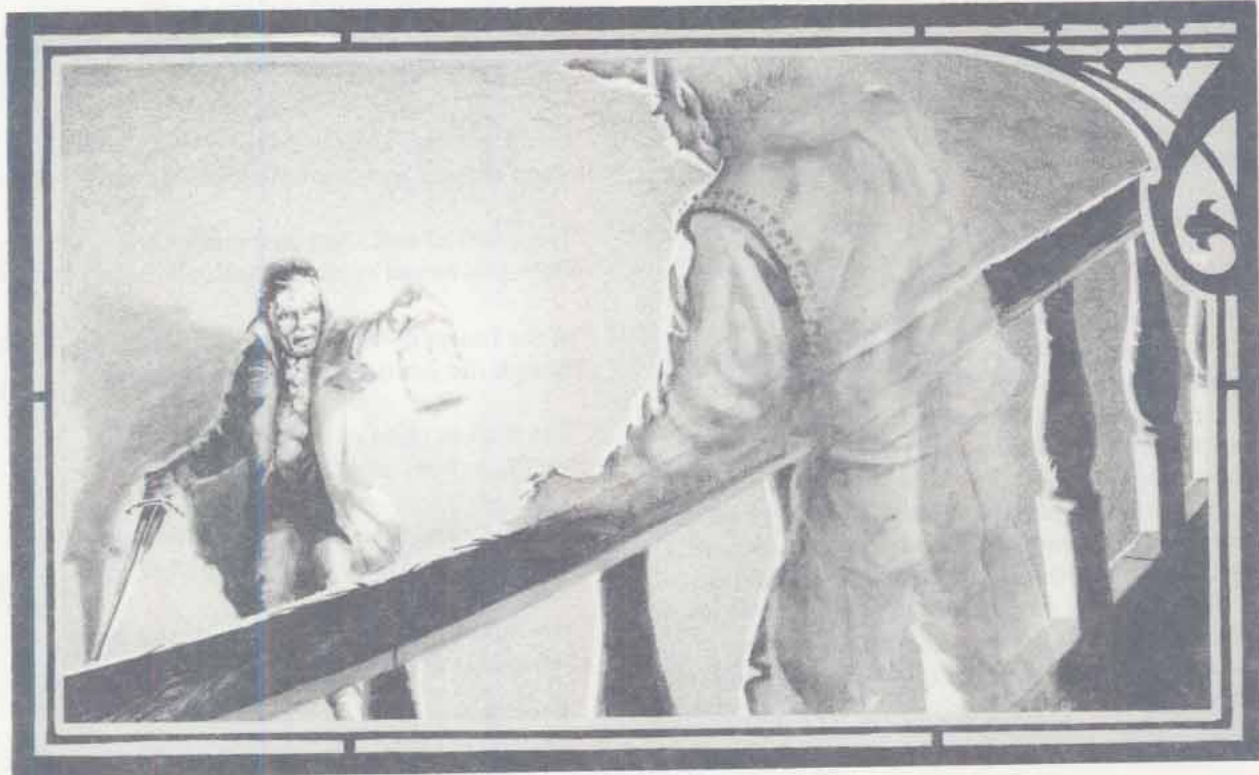
The lines about Inajira will be explained in the forthcoming adventure, *Roots of Evil*. The last lines are merely a closing statement, finishing the prophecy.

Hyskosa will not explain any of the verses. In fact, he does not know the true meanings, since the hexad came to him in a vision.

Hyskosa insists on reading the palms of the characters. He tells them that he has the power to part the veil of the future and foresee any dangers. He says that it will take only a few minutes for the reading. If the characters refuse, they don't get the clues from this encounter. If they consent to a reading, Hyskosa asks each character to hold out his left hand, palm up, touching the hand of the next character.

Hyskosa traces the lines across each of your hands, muttering all the while to himself. He spreads his hands wide across yours, so that at least one finger touches each of you. He lifts his head, and you can see his eyes, completely white and without pupils, like those of a blind man.

A deep, gravelly voice rises from his throat, declaring, "Ye shall not escape from



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Castle Avernus lest ye hold the life of the master. Though ye might leave its walls, the master shall surely hunt thee down and slay thee. Search the highest spires. Be warned—thou hast but three days to escape. Hope lies in the east with the rising sun. Seek the shrine of Nevuchar, for only there may ye destroy the life of the master. Be warned—should thou discard his life carelessly, upon the day of thy death shall the master inhabit thy body and wreak vengeance upon all whom ye hold close."

The small man's eyes transform to appear normal, revealing their dark pupils. His voice returns to its natural tone and he says, "You shall witness the end of the world. More than that I could not see."

This somewhat cryptic palm reading should tell the characters that unless they possess Azalin's phylactery, they cannot escape Castle Avernus. They must take the phylactery to the shrine of Nevuchar to destroy it. The town of Nevuchar Springs lies in the far eastern end of Darkon.

If the players are not able to unravel this themselves, use Hyskosa to help them. He can explain some of the passages well enough to give the PCs the right idea.

Hyskosa will go with the PCs willingly. He has no combat or spellcasting abilities. The DM should feel free to let him die at any point. If he is needed again, use his ghostly spirit, as outlined below.

If Met as a Spirit in the Gallery

If the characters do not enter the dungeons and meet Hyskosa, he senses their passage and their failure to follow the "proper" course of the future. The seer wills himself to die, knowing that he will become a ghostly spirit with an unfinished task to perform.

In spirit form, he encounters the PCs a round or two after they enter the gallery (room 13). He appears as a transparent ghostly figure, looking just as he did in his cell. Manacles and leg irons

bind him, and their rattle is heard when he moves. The characters need to make fear checks with a +3 bonus upon seeing him. He is immune to any form of normal or magical attack and cannot be turned.

Hyskosa doesn't bother to introduce himself or even declare his neutrality. He just utters his hexad (see above). Once that is finished, he talks more normally to the PCs. After answering a few questions, he makes one final pronouncement:

"Ye shall not escape from Castle Avernus lest ye hold the life of the master. Though ye might leave its walls, the master shall surely hunt thee down and slay thee. Search the highest spires. Be warned—thou hast but three days to escape. Hope lies in the east with the rising sun. Seek the shrine of Nevuchar, for only there may ye destroy the life of the master. Be warned—should thou discard his life carelessly, upon the day of thy death shall the master inhabit thy body and wreak vengeance upon all whom ye hold close."

The ghostly face looks down upon you kindly. In a more natural voice, it says, "You shall witness the end of the world. More than that I cannot tell thee." His transparent shape distorts and clouds, finally vanishing.

Skeever's Revenge

Although Azalin will not bother the characters during their search for his phylactery, his imp familiar has no such restrictions. Skeever will harass the characters whenever he can. The harassment doesn't begin until the PCs have left the dungeon levels and emerged onto the ground floor. From then on, the PCs are fair game.

Skeever is not interested in risking his own life. He will pull just about any dirty trick he can without endangering his own skin. If the imp is forced into physical combat, he uses his

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poisonous tail sting. However, he takes any opportunity to escape. At some point, the imp might make a mistake and the characters may kill him—let Skeever die. If the PCs are clever or lucky enough to kill the imp, Azalin immediately loses four levels of experience. The lich also loses the *regeneration* and magic resistance granted him by the imp. This will make the final encounter with Azalin much easier for them.

Skeever has the ability to turn invisible and to shapechange at will. Using these powers, he can follow the characters unobserved. When he sees an opportunity to play a dirty trick, he takes it. Azalin has gifted him with a *ring of spell storing*, which Skeever will gladly use for this occasion. If he ever gets into real trouble, Skeever can say “*sanctuary*” and be instantly teleported to his tower (room 79). From there, he will journey forth again to harass the characters. Since he regenerates one hit point each round, Skeever will always have full hit points when he is encountered.

Skeever (imp): Int Avg; AC 2; MV 6, FI 18 (B); HD 2+2; hp 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA *poison tail*; SD hit only by silver or enchanted weapons, *shapechange* (large spider, raven, giant rat, goat), *detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (all these powers at will), immune to cold, fire, electricity, save vs. spell at 7 HD, regenerate 1 hp/round; MR 25%; SZ T (2' tall); ML 10; XP 650; AL LE.

Ring of spell storing: darkness 15' radius, phantasmal force, improved phantasmal force, suggestion, telekinesis.

Following are some specific tactics the imp might employ. All of these are optional encounters. The DM can use them or skip them as he sees fit. If the DM thinks of a more clever way to use Skeever's talents, he should do so.

If the characters are on a balcony or other precarious position, Skeever flies straight at a leaning character while remaining invisible. He attempts to knock the character over the edge

and then fly away. Skeever must make an attack roll against AC 10. Armor doesn't help against this kind of attack; neither does Dexterity, because the character won't see the imp coming. A successful attack means that Skeever has struck the character solidly. The character is then allowed a Dexterity check to avoid falling. The DM can modify the character's roll to reflect unusual circumstances. Skeever can do the same trick with a character standing at the top of a flight of stairs. He will be visible for one round as he flies away, then turns invisible again.

In the conjuration room (room 31), the imp waits on the balcony at the top of the room. He uses his *ring of spell storing* to cast *darkness 15' radius* when the characters are halfway up. This douses any light sources and allows the wraiths to attack. Once again, Skeever will be visible for a round as he uses the ring, then he will disappear.

During the encounter with Axrock, the dwarven vampire (room 17), Skeever will use his *suggestion* spell. He creeps up on the character at the rear while invisible and whispers the *suggestion* to race up and knock Axrock down. Since using the *suggestion* spell makes him visible for a round, Skeever makes certain to remain out of Axrock's sight at that moment. It is quite possible that another character will see Skeever, however. The characters have one round to convince Axrock that they made a mistake before the vampire attacks.

Skeever can use his *phantasmal force* spells to create illusions of Azalin. Any such illusion in this castle is highly believable and therefore, anyone attempting to disbelieve the illusions does so with a -2 penalty. Typically, the imp will have the image of Azalin marching steadily toward the characters, pronouncing their imminent doom. It is reasonable that spells and weapons will not affect a lich of his power, so even attacking it might not break the illusion. Seeing Azalin coming to attack is cause for a fear check by all the characters.

CASTLE AUERNUS



his impressive castle sits atop a hill of broken rock a few miles south of Il Aluk. The massive structure appears even more solid than the bedrock below it. The natives of Darkon believe this castle is a gateway to a dark abyss, and in a sense, they are right.

The castle's name (pronounced Ah-VARE-nus) stems from a peculiar

phenomenon. There are only a few species of birds (one called *avis* in the old tongue) willing to fly over the fortress. Only vultures, crows, and the like can be found circling the sullen stone walls. Other species die mysteriously as soon as their shadows fall upon its spires.

Azalin's castle is considered to be a sinkhole of evil, which adds a -2 penalty to any attempt to turn undead within its walls. Certain rooms and areas are worse, and may force stiffer penalties. The Room of Life (room 70) does not act as a sinkhole of evil unless Azalin himself is present.

It is well known in Darkon that Azalin is a powerful wizard. The sight of his doom guards on the walls is chilling, but not surprising to the common folk of the area. The archlich generally keeps his more grotesque undead slaves out of casual view.

High up in the castle (room 68) a groaning spirit haunts a lonely tower. Her moans of pain can be heard in the courtyards and on the walls. Inside the main castle, the sounds are too muted to be heard. However, her elven blood calls to any true elves. They can hear her moans and cries from anywhere in the castle except the underground dungeon levels. There

is no ill effect to hearing the banshee's wails from a distance.

When the characters regain their heads, it is shortly after nightfall. A full moon hangs in the sky as they traverse the dark corridors of Castle Avernus. The moonlight dimly illuminates any room that has a few arrow slits. Otherwise, the PCs will need torches or some other form of light in order to see their surroundings.

Halls of Humanity: On those few occasions when Azalin has living guests, they are restricted to the Halls of Humanity. This is the name of the east wing of the castle, also called the Block. Guests have the run of that wing, but may not venture out of it at risk of pain of death. At the time of this adventure, there are no guests in the castle.

Construction: Most of the windows are actually arrow slits. These narrow openings allow anyone to look outside. However, they are only six inches wide, too narrow to be climbed through.

The distance between all floors is 15 feet. The height from floor to ceiling is around 12 feet, allowing 3 feet for supports. The bulk of the castle is stone. The stones are large and tightly fitted. Although there is no mortar, the fit is tight enough to not even allow air to pass.

General Features

Walls and Towers: Doom guards patrol the walls and interiors of the watch towers. There is a 1 in 6 chance of encountering a doom guard for each full turn (10 rounds) the PCs spend in the gate towers or on the walls. The doom guards attack anyone in the towers. Since they cannot talk, they cannot raise an alarm. However, Axrock knows immediately if one of his creations is destroyed. The dwarven vampire will not seek vengeance himself, but tells Azalin that it happened.

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Doom Guards (63): Int Low; AC 2; MV 9; HD 5; hp 30 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SD cannot be turned, immune to mind affecting spells, immune to biological effects; SZ M; ML 20; XP 2,000; AL N.

Rooms of Magic: There are 10 rooms of magic in the castle, one for each school of wizardry. Azalin built them to augment his magical abilities, hoping that they would permit him to learn new spells in those schools. They did indeed augment his power, but did not allow him to learn new spells. Within each room, spells of that school are cast as if the caster were two levels higher.

Room Descriptions

1. Storeroom: This large room is lined with shelves. Any spell component imaginable can be found here. Everything is clearly labeled. Two large, locked trunks sit back to back in the center of the room. Inside them are the characters' spellbooks and other items that might have been stored in back packs or bags.

On one of the shelves is a large green bottle labeled "sanguine solution." Inside is a dark red paste. If it is smeared on a character's neck, his head can be positioned properly and it will be reattached. If the head is positioned crooked, it is forever reattached in that position! If the characters expressly state that they are taking care to place their heads on straight, they do so successfully. If they simply state that they "put the head back on," then there is a 5% chance of it being crooked. Such an error does not affect combat abilities in any way, but does make a character look somewhat deformed. Such a character suffers a permanent 1-point reduction to Charisma unless the defect is somehow corrected (*limited wish* or similar magic.)

2. Azalin's Wizard Lab: This large room is divided into several sections and is filled with shelves and long tables. Only one chair can be found in the entire room, and it has heavy leather straps on the arms and legs.

The shelves contain books, spell components, liquids of varying colors, strange sculptures, stuffed animals, jars of live insects, worms, lizards, reams of blank parchment, glassware of all shapes and sizes, and so on.

All of the texts are obscure reference sources for various magics. Most of them are unreadable by Azalin due to his curse. He keeps them around, hoping to one day be freed of his curse. An open book lies on the table where Azalin put the characters' heads in jars. A quick perusal of it reveals the exact ointment needed for the characters to reattach their heads. They cannot find this ointment in the lab, only in the storeroom.

There are a few magical items of value here—in particular, two *potions of healing* and a deep red *ioun stone* (+1 to Dexterity).

The lab has recently been infested by osquips. These six-legged, ratlike monsters have chewed a tunnel through the stone floor. The entrance to the tunnel is underneath a large table, behind some small barrels. By the time the characters are free to move around, the naga will have killed all the osquips. The tunnel itself is just wide enough for a human to squeeze through. It leads into the bone room (room 3). The tunnel should be described as tight and claustrophobic. This is the only way out of the wizard's lab. Azalin uses only *teleport* spells to get in and out.

Spirit Naga (1): Int High; AC 4; MV 12; HD 10; hp 50; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SA *charm gaze*, *poison bite*, *spells*; SZ H (15' long); ML 14; XP 5,000; AL CE.

Wizard Spells: *magic missile*, *phantasmal force*, *charm person*, *wall of fog*; *invisibility*, *mirror image*; *protection from normal missiles*.

Priest Spells: *darkness*, *protection from good*, *curse*; *hold person*, *silence 15' radius*.

The naga has ignored the PCs until now, but prepares for an upcoming fight. She knows that the characters will attack her or she'll be forced to attack them eventually. She hides in the osquip tunnel while they free their bodies from

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the Zharakim. She casts *protection from normal missiles*, *protection from good*, and *invisibility* as they make their way toward the storeroom, or if they begin to hunt for her. Once invisible, she seeks out a character and surprises him with a bite. She then tries to make eye contact with a PC to *charm* him. Beyond that, her strategy will be dictated by the events.

3. Bone Room: The floor of this room is buried in thousands of bones—the bones of animals, humans, demihumans and monsters. From this assortment, Azalin can summon virtually any skeletal form he desires. The only other feature of this room is the four massive stone pillars that form the foundation of the castle.

The osquip tunnel opens into the rib cage of a giant. It is fairly simple to crawl out of the skeleton. However, the first character out has a small problem. The rib cage snaps shut, like a bear trap, imprisoning that character behind bars of bone. The giant skeleton guardian then stands up and attacks the other characters as they crawl out of the tunnel.

The giant skeleton wields an enormous single headed axe made of bones. The edge is wickedly sharp. Attacking the skeleton risks hurting the character trapped on the inside. Any miss with a slashing or piercing weapon has a 50% chance of hitting the trapped PC. Any hit with a slashing or piercing weapon causes half damage to the skeleton (per the rules) and the other half to the PC. Blunt weapons cause normal damage without affecting the trapped character.

If the characters specifically state that they are aiming for the legs, arms, or head, they have a -4 chance to hit, but will not hurt their trapped companion. The trapped character does not have enough room to wield a weapon, but can cast spells or use magical items.

Monster skeletons are 6 HD creatures and are turned as wraiths. Azalin's castle is considered to be a sinkhole of evil, which places a -2 penalty on any attempt to turn undead. If the skeleton is turned, it flees with the captured PC still inside.

Giant Skeleton (1): Int Non; AC 6; MV 12; HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SD immune to *fear*, *charm*, *hold*; SZ H (12'); ML 14; XP 650; AL N.

4. Lower Dungeon: This is where Azalin keeps his most valuable and dangerous prisoners. Most of the cells are empty. The walls of this dungeon are lined with lead, to prevent *teleporting* and other magical means of escape. The cells along the east wall have solid iron doors. Those in the center and the four larger cells have heavy, iron-barred gates. All of the cells containing prisoners are *wizard locked*, as is the door that connects the two hallways and the one that connects the outer room to the first hallway. The door that connects to the bone room (#3) is not locked or *wizard locked*. It is fully 12 inches thick, made of oak and banded in iron. It cannot be smashed open even by a giant.

The large outer room is home to the bone golem (alternate: flesh golem) warden of the dungeon. It attacks anything that tries to enter or leave the dungeon. It will enter the dungeon corridors if necessary, but will not enter the bone room.

Bone Golem: Int Non; AC 0; MV 12; HD 14; hp 70; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6; SA hideous laugh; SD +2 weapon to hit, half damage from piercing or edged weapons, immune to most spells; SZ M; ML 20; XP 18,000; AL N.

The following creatures of power are imprisoned in the dungeon (one each): drow, werefox, mind flayer, werewolf, werebear, red widow*, wereraven*. The creatures followed by an asterisk (*) are from the RAVENLOFT® *Monstrous Compendium* and should be substituted with other creatures if the DM does not have a copy.

In addition to the creatures of power, a group of three elves is held prisoner, as well as a lone vistana named Hyskosa. His actions are described earlier. The Dungeon Master should arbitrarily decide which creatures occupy which cells.

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The elves are neutral good 6th-level rangers. They do not have arms or equipment. They will gladly join the party if asked, as will the good-aligned creatures (werebear and wereraven). In any future fights, traps, or other dangerous situations, these brave souls are the first to be attacked (in effect, cannon fodder). If they die in particularly horrifying ways, horror checks are called for from each of the PCs.

No experience points are awarded for killing a creature trapped in its cell. Killing the elves or any other creature without good reason is cause for a Ravenloft powers check. Knowing that a creature is an evil monster is reason enough, but all of these creatures, except the drow and the mind flayer, will appear to be human at first.

Elven Rangers (Relas, Vergo, & Mauran): Int Very; AC 9; MV 12; HD 6; hp 27, 23, 19 (11, 15, 5 when found wounded); THAC0 17 (16 w/bow or sword); #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by weapon; SD move silently 57%, hide in shadows 42%, infravision 60', find secret doors; SZ M; ML 16; AL NG.

5. Treasure Chamber: Azalin keeps his money here, along with a few important magical items. Although the door to the room is *wizard locked*, it has no other guardians or traps. The lich places little value on money. The mere fact that it is in the lowest level of his dungeon is protection enough.

There are dozens of chests in this room. Each is filled to the top with small bags of coins, 100 per bag. Each chest is devoted to a single type of coin. Each is minted with the face of Azalin (his human face). There are no gems here. Azalin keeps those in another part of the castle.

The characters can take as much as they can carry. If they do so, all encumbrance rules apply. Carrying all that treasure will certainly slow them considerably.

The coins in this room carry a mild curse. A *detect magic* spell will reveal nothing. If they are removed from the castle without Azalin's permission, the face on the coin changes to

become his undead face. Shopkeepers in Darkon will refuse the coins, but it is possible to "launder" them. It will take several days to find a moneychanger who will accept the transaction, and the exchange rate is one real coin for four of the cursed coins. Shopkeepers and merchants outside of Darkon, including anyone in other realms (Toril, Oerth, Krynn, etc.) will accept the coins, but must make the equivalent of a fear check if handed one.

Hidden in a false bottom of one of the chests is a clerical scroll with three spells (*remove fear*, *restoration*, *resurrection*) and a *cloak of protection* +3.

6. Unused Room: This room is empty.

7. Arcane Torture Chamber: This room is specifically designed to torture or extract information from powerful creatures that might have magical powers. The walls of this room are lined with lead, and the mortar in the stone is mixed with basilisk blood to prevent *teleporting* or other magical escapes. The door has a *wizard lock* cast on it by Azalin.

Scattered around the room are many common torture devices, as well as a few stranger devices. Most of them are magical and can be detected as such. In the center of the room is a copper brazier with a fire in it. No wood, oil, or other obvious fuel is apparent. The flames are actually a small fire elemental magically trapped in the brazier.

Half a dozen magical daggers (+1 enchantment) are mounted on a rack. Chains and manacles are all enchanted to adjust to the size of their victim, and are unbreakable.

8. Tower Stairs: These circular stairs rise from the depths of Avernus to one of its highest spires, but only a few floors at a time. The first flight of stairs ends on the ground floor and exits into room 13.

9. Antechamber: This room is empty. Only a few cobwebs grace the cold, stone walls.

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10. Upper Dungeon: This is where Azalin keeps ordinary prisoners. Most of the people here are normal humans or demihumans. They have committed political errors or personal crimes against Azalin. The archlich really doesn't care about common criminals—only those who have wronged him personally. All are sentenced to death, some more slowly than others. About 75% of these cells are full, which brings the prison population to roughly 30.

Half the prisoners have been driven mad. All are at 25% of their normal hit points. If the PCs free them, they will die before they can escape from the castle unless personally guarded by the characters. Azalin's doom guards and zombies will slay them mercilessly. If the PCs try to take them along, the DM should see to it that the prisoners die in horrifying ways on a regular basis. They set off every trap, fail all horror checks, and basically serve as cannon fodder.

Two prisoners in this group are noteworthy. Both are 4th-level thieves and are twins, a brother and a sister. They have 50% of their hit points and will gladly join the party if asked. For the duration of this adventure, they will deal with the PCs honestly and not attempt to pilfer anything. However, they could die during combat or when a trap is set off.

The guards are all ju-ju zombies. They are smart enough to know that the PCs don't belong here and will attack them. Two are always patrolling the corridors among the cells. The remaining four are in the large outer room, awaiting orders.

Human Thieves (Geoff & Janeth): Int Avg; AC 9; MV 12; HD 4; hp 15, 12 (8, 7 when found wounded); THAC0 19 (18 w/missiles); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA backstab; SZ M; ML 13; AL CN.
Geoff: PP 65%; OL 27%; F/RT 25%; MS 43%; HS 35%; HN 15%; CW 88%; RL 0%.
Janeth: PP 25%; OL 40%; F/RT 53%; MS 30%; HS 20%; HN 25%; CW 90%; RL 15%.

Ju-ju zombies (6): Int Low; AC 6; MV 9; HD 3 + 12; hp 28 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 + 2; SD hit only by +1 weapon or better, suffer only half damage from blunt or piercing weapons or fire, immune to illusions, mind affecting spells, electricity, *magic missiles*, turn as 8 HD monsters; SZ M; ML special; AL N (E).

11. Zombie Barracks: This is home to Azalin's zombie army, which numbers more than 500 zombies. While he can call upon the dead of Darkon regardless of where they are buried, the archlich has found it useful to have an army present at his castle. None of these bodies will move or respond to the characters in any way. They are simply corpses until Azalin animates them. Viewing this room is cause for a horror check.

The rotting stench of decayed, human flesh surrounds you. The echoes of your hushed voices tell you that this room is enormous, stretching far beyond your meager light source. In the flickering torch light, you see mounds of dead bodies. Each appears to be a soldier now long dead, for each wears scraps of rusted armor, and their clawed hands still grip rusty blades.

12. Outer Bailey: This open courtyard lies between the front gate and the immense main keep.

The flagstone courtyard is barren, devoid of even the smallest weed. Scant moonlight casts murky shadows in the corners. The narrow double doors of what is obviously a main gate are five times the height of a man and wide enough for two horses. Twin stairs hug the inner walls, climbing secretively upward to meet the imposing guard towers that flank the gate.

The stone wall to the left of the gate is low, barely higher than the top of the gate itself.

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A slow-moving, armored figure glides from battlement to battlement. The wall to the right of the gate is nearly double the height of the gate. Both are dwarfed by the immense round keep opposite the gate, rising into the starlit night like a man-made mountain of solid stone.

A far-away moan of agony reaches your ears. It echoes off the walls and is finally absorbed by the cloudless night sky. As the moan dies away, you hear a faint shriek of pain and agony.

No one will notice the characters while they are in the bailey. The doom guards that walk the walls can see them, but ignore them. If the characters make for the gate or otherwise attempt to leave the castle without Azalin's phylactery, two things happen. First, Hyskosa or his phantom spirit appears and appeals to the characters. As stated earlier, he warns them that the only way they can escape with their lives is to secure the phylactery. If they ignore this warning and try to leave, they have outlived their usefulness to Azalin. He will immediately attack, attempting to kill them or drive them back into the castle. If they will not carry his phylactery, he will find others to do it.

13. Gallery: This double room spans two floors. A balcony rings the outer walls. The northeast pillar supports a set of stairs that allows access to the balcony. The southwest pillar is encircled by stairs that climb through a hole in the ceiling, two floors up. The doors to both baileys (rooms 12 and 16) are built to withstand siege equipment. The PCs cannot break them down and they are locked. Azalin doesn't want the characters to leave without his phylactery.

Azalin has hung many portraits here. They decorate the walls on both levels. Each is larger than life and depicts one of the domain lords of Ravenloft. The lords are shown in their most human-looking appearances (if applicable). No names are shown, for Azalin knows each of

them. He uses any means available, magical or mundane, to get such portraits painted. Some are stolen from the domain lords' estates at great risk.

Many of the portraits were painted by a vampire slave who was an artist before Azalin corrupted his talents. The vampire traveled to each domain personally to see each lord before beginning his work.

If the characters reach this room and have not yet encountered Hyskosa, they meet him here. As stated earlier, the vistana seer wills himself to die when he feels the PCs choose a future that does not lead them to his prison cell. His spirit meets them in this room.

Give the PCs a minute or two to look around the gallery before starting this encounter. For details, see the earlier section on Hyskosa.

High up in the castle (room 68), a groaning spirit haunts a lonely tower. Her moans of pain can be heard in the courtyards and on the battlements. Inside the main castle, the sounds are too muted to be heard. However, her elven blood calls to any true elves in the party. They can hear her moans and cries the moment they enter this room, and throughout the rest of the castle. There is no ill effect for hearing her cries at this distance.

14. Foyer: This room is furnished with sofas, chairs, and a mirror.

15. Hall of Records: It is said that every person who enters Darkon loses his memory of his former life after a few months (see the RAVENLOFT® boxed set entry for Darkon). The reason can be found on the second floor of the Hall of Records.

Before you is a gigantic glowing book, taller than a man and twice as wide. It floats upright a few inches over the stone floor. In front of the book is a large table, filled with books of normal size. One is open and a multicolored quill enscribes in it, although no hand or creature directs it.

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Closer examination reveals that the large book, called the *Book of Names*, is filled with names and dates. The books on the tables are all blank. The bobbing quill seems to be writing a journal, describing events in the life of an unknown traveler.

Both the *Book of Names* and the pen are indestructible with the means the characters have at hand. The pen can be stopped merely by taking hold of it. However, it will automatically return to the table (floating, teleporting, or whatever is necessary) if removed from this room.

Azalin found the *Book of Names* in his castle when Darkon was first created. It was inscribing his own name as the first entry. If the characters flip through the *Book of Names* to see the first entry, it reads: Firan Zal'honan, the Azal'Lan of Knurl, 429 CY. Azal'Lan means "wizard ruler" in Old Oeridian.

Over time, the archlich discovered that a few months after someone entered Darkon, the pen began enscribing his life story into one of the blank books. As events were written, the person lost his memory of them. When the pen was finished, it would write the name of the person in the *Book of Names*, along with the date. As soon as the person's name was entered into the huge tome, he lost all memory of his previous existence and gained false memories of a life and family in Darkon.

The shelves in the Hall of Records are filled with these biographies. The name of each person is penned on the spine. The pages are filled with a diary account of their lives up until they were entered into the *Book of Names*. There is no order or organization to the books—they aren't even stacked neatly on the shelves.

The archlich has some control over the *Book of Names*. With arcane command words, he can find any requested name. A glowing streamer seeks out the matching volume on the shelves. He can then study that person's life prior to integration into Darkon.

There are only a few ways for a person to retrieve his memories. If the book of a person's

life is burned in a magical fire, his memory returns and his name is erased from the huge book. If *dust of disappearance* is sprinkled over a person's name, he also regains his memory. However, his life story remains on the shelves. Both of these methods are only temporary. In one to three months, the floating quill will once again begin to enscribe the person's life into a blank book.

If a *quill of law* is used to draw a line through a name in the large book, the person gets his memory back. The story of his life remains on the shelves and Azalin can still locate it. However, his name can never again be written in Azalin's giant book.

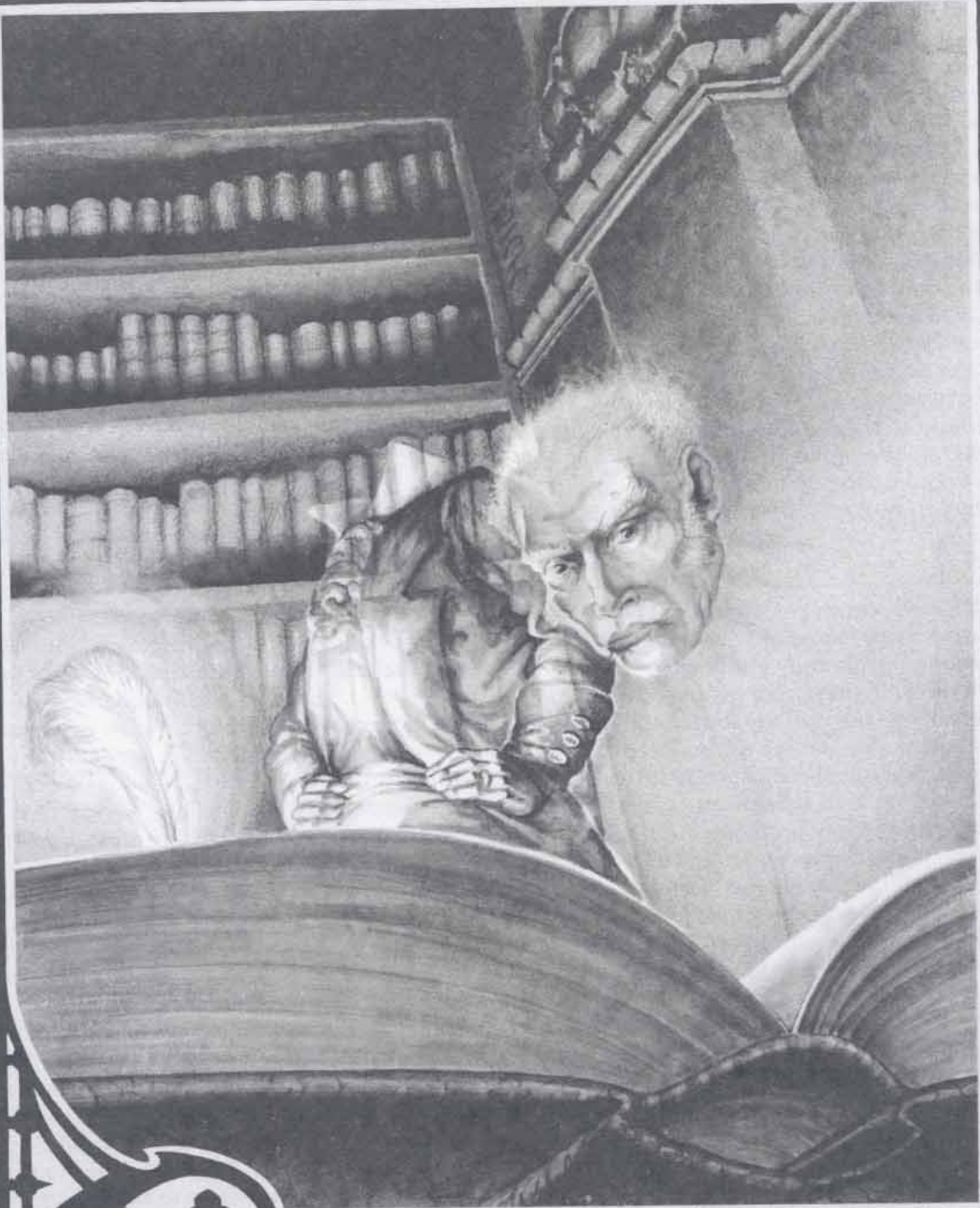
A ghostly librarian named Elzarath is in service here (see the RAVENLOFT® boxed set). He appears to be an elderly man whose head was severed. His head can move independently of his body. The head floats through the Hall of Records and the library. Elzarath can carry and move small objects (like books). He cannot attack or be harmed by the PCs. Using Van Richten's system of classification, Elzarath is a first-magnitude, semicorporeal humanoid spirit.

When a book is completed, Elzarath finds a place for it on the shelves. When the supply of blank books dwindles, he brings more books and places them on the table.

Seeing the phantom librarian is cause for a horror check, due mainly to the personal decapitation experience the PCs have suffered. Elzarath will speak only if spoken to. His disembodied head does the talking while his body continues to work. He will openly speak about the book and how it works, if asked. Elzarath does not know about the three ways to erase a name, although he does know that a name can be erased. He has no knowledge of the castle outside the Hall of Records and the library.

Given a name, Elzarath can find any book in 2d4 rounds. However, since Azalin's book is not labeled "Azalin," Elzarath can find it only if the birth name of the archlich is given. Elzarath has never flipped back through the *Book of Names* and does not know Azalin's birth name. If the characters obtain Azalin's

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book, give them a photocopy of the handout at the back of this adventure.

16. Inner Bailey: This rear courtyard is empty. No one will take any notice of the characters while they are in the bailey. The doom guards that walk the walls can see the PCs, but ignore them. If the characters make for the gate or attempt to leave the castle without Azalin's phylactery, two things happen. First, Hyskosa or his phantom spirit appears and appeals to the characters. As stated earlier, he warns them that the only way they can escape with their lives is to secure the phylactery.

Azalin will be watching the party carefully from the balcony (top floor of room 31). If they ignore Hyskosa's warning and try to leave, they have outlived their usefulness. He immediately attacks, attempting to kill the PCs or drive them back into the castle. If they will not carry his phylactery, Azalin will find others who can do it.

This small courtyard is enclosed by looming walls. Moonlight glints off the armored shapes slowly walking the battlements. Behind you, the immense round towers of the keep rise up toward the stars. Looking up, you can see a crenelated walkway high overhead. A stairway winds up and out of sight. Just below the walkway is a small, dark balcony protruding from the smooth stone. Higher up, on the face of the tower, is a large, mysterious hole, fully as wide as four men's outstretched arms.

Black smoke rises from the squat chimney of a small, wooden building in the far corner of the courtyard. The rhythmic ringing of what sounds like hammer and anvil can clearly be heard in the still night air. An open doorway emits a dull, red glow.

Between the ringing tones of the smithy, far-away groans and cries of agony can be heard. They seem to waft down from the highest castle towers.

17. Smithy: Inside this building, a dwarven vampire (alternate: standard vampire who happens to be a dwarf) named Axrock works steadily on an *anvil of darkness*, creating another doom guard for Azalin. He looks like a normal dwarf when the PCs meet him.

The stout body of the dwarven smith is outlined by the red glow of his furnace. His thickly muscled arms steadily hammer a piece of steel resting on his anvil. Behind him is a partially completed suit of armor. He speaks without looking up or ceasing his labors. "What's yer need?"

Axrock's duty is to create doom guards—suits of animated armor (see the *RAVENLOFT® Monstrous Compendium*). He will most likely have heard the PCs coming; as a vampire, his hearing is supernaturally sharp. He has no interest in starting a fight, since that would interrupt his work. He can talk while hammering away on the armor, but only if visitors are respectful of his work.

Axrock knows that doom guards, zombies, and skeletons are the principal guards of the castle. He knows that Azalin's quarters are in the highest spires of the castle. He does not know where the phylactery is hidden. If the PCs try to recruit him, since it is not obvious that he is a vampire, Axrock declines, saying with typical dwarven fervor that he must first finish his work.

If Axrock is forced to fight and is reduced to 10 hp or less, he shrieks in agony and uses his *stonewalking* ability to sink into the earth. His intent is to make the PCs think he has been destroyed. He vows to make them pay for disrupting his work. While underground, he waits until he has regenerated all his hit points (7-10 rounds). He then pops up with a battle axe and attacks the characters again. Axrock harasses the PCs until one side is dead.

Skeever may use a *suggestion* spell to try to force one of the characters to rush forward and knock down the dwarf. Since this would

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interrupt his work and possibly ruin the doom guard, Axrock will be upset. The characters have one round to calm him before he attacks. The DM must judge whether the characters adequately soothe the dwarf's rage.

Vampire, dwarven (Axrock): Int Very; AC 0; MV 9; HD 9+3; hp 40; THAC0 11 (9 w/axe); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+4; SA *fear gaze*, CON drain, *stonewalking*; SD hit only by +2 or better weapons, +5 save vs. wands, rods, staves, & spell, regen. 4 hp/round if underground; SZ S (4'); ML 14; XP 3,000; AL NE.

18. Warehouse: Azalin has little need for the stored goods common to a normal castle. His unliving servitors don't need food or other supplies. What few supplies he needs are stored in this warehouse. There are some foodstuffs and barrels of water for those occasions when living guests are present. There are raw materials and tools for making repairs to almost anything. There is also a small cache of weapons and armor. Packed away in chests are at least one of every type of nonmagical weapon and armor conceivable.

19. Servitor's Quarters: Castle Avernus has little need for traditional servitors. Its large undead staff performs most menial tasks. The powerful magic of its lord handles the rest. The servants that stay here are primarily responsible for the comfort and well-being of the few living guests Azalin might decide to entertain.

Axrock (the dwarven vampire from room 17) has one room. It contains a stone vault the size of a coffin, where he "sleeps" during the day. Various stone and metal objects of beauty are here as well. The other servants are not aware that he is a vampire.

The other four rooms are home to a family of unusual ghosts. Azalin has bound them in service to himself and the castle. They are not ghosts as defined in the *Monstrous Compendium*. To use Dr. Van Richten's classification, they are first-magnitude,

semicorporeal, humanoid spirits. Their origins are rooted in dedication to their tasks and to each other. In terms of alignment, they are lawful neutral.

In any other castle, this scene would be familiar and even comfortable. The room is obviously a washroom. A middle-aged woman scrubs clothes in a tub. Another woman, ancient as the moon, sits in a chair, mending a nameless piece of cloth. A man is bent over a small table tinkering with a lantern. Two small children play quietly at their feet. All glance up at you, smile, and continue their work. Somehow, seeing such a normal family doing ordinary work is somewhat chilling.

Cranbell and Ariane Tallow are the parents. The two small children are Thomas and Frinella. Half a dozen aunts and uncles are present, as well as one matriarchal grandmother named Irabell. They look and act like normal people. They can move objects with their hands just like normal people. They are immune to physical damage, but not magical damage or magical weapons. They can walk through walls, but cannot fly or float.

If the characters spend any significant length of time with the Tallow family, they might see one of the children walk through a wall. The Tallows are allowed to go anywhere in the castle. However, fear of Azalin prevents them from helping the PCs much. Within the Halls of Humanity (all floors) and the ground floor of the castle, they are very friendly and helpful. Beyond those areas, they dare not help. In general, they have sad, melancholy personalities. It's hardly a picnic being a weak ghost in the enforced service of an evil archlich.

The specific functions of these four rooms are kitchen, laundry, mending room, living quarters. Activities such as making soap or candles are done outdoors (at night, of course) in the inner bailey (room 16). Technically, the living quarters are haunted because the Tallows

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are ghosts. The Tallow family works here. They keep up the pretense of normal living in these rooms, despite their undead nature.

20. Banquet Hall: Azalin's castle has a banquet hall purely for appearances. On rare occasions, he might use it to entertain living guests. At this time, it is a well-decorated room dominated by a long table. Intricately carved chairs surround it. The chair at the north end of the table is grander than the rest, since it is Azalin's. Dust and cobwebs cover everything.

21. Waiting Room: Anyone seeking an audience with Azalin waits here. The archlich is widely thought to be an immortal sorcerer king, not a horror from beyond the grave. Occasionally, he receives petitioners in his role as ruler of Darkon. Elegant divans and chairs are here for dignitaries to rest in. An ornate set of double doors leads to the throne room. A wide, curving stair leads up to the next floor.

Two doom guards are here, one to either side of the door. As soon as the characters enter the room, they snap to attention with a metallic rattle. They do not attack the party unless attacked first. If the characters approach within five feet of the throne room doors, the doom guards turn and open the ponderous doors.

22. Throne Room: Azalin uses this room to receive guests who have been granted audience with "King Azalin" of Darkon.

An enormous room opens before you, stretching well over a hundred feet to the other end. The ceiling is higher than all but the tallest trees. The walls and ceiling are layered in hammered gold, finely filigreed and delicately painted. Rich silk tapestries hang from the walls. The far end of the room appears to be one huge, red velvet curtain.

Centered against the backdrop of the curtain is a monolithic throne. The chair itself sits atop a raised, stepped stage as tall as a man. The throne itself is sized to seat a

giant, not a man. It is worked in silver and inlaid with rubies and sapphires.

Seated on this throne is the moldering body of a giant, fully twice the size of a normal man. Torn flesh hangs bloodless from its limbs and torso. A crude iron crown, set with a single yellow gem, rests on its head. A blood-red cape, trimmed in black, hangs from its shoulders. It raises one hand to point at you, and a cruel, booming laugh rolls through the room.

A permanent illusion makes the room appear to be richly decorated. The curtain against the back wall can be parted directly behind the throne, although the split is not visible, even up close. The same illusion makes the room appear twice as large as its actual size. All the dimensions in the description above have been doubled. It is no coincidence that anyone seated upon the throne also appears to be twice normal size. This room actually spans two floors, giving it a real ceiling height of just over 25 feet.

Anyone seated on the throne can see the room for what it really is. The room is cold, barren, and significantly smaller than it first appears. The ceiling sports large spider webs filled with tiny glowing eyes and scuttling bodies (none will attack). The throne is made of a giant's skull and pieces of his skeleton. The red velvet curtain is moldy and patched.

The giant figure is a normal zombie. However, he is impressive enough that each character must make a fear check upon seeing him. Azalin is toying with the characters, making them think that a giant-sized version of himself waits for them here. If one of the characters *specifically* asks (and *only* if someone asks) whether this thing looks like Azalin, the PC should be told it does not. If the PCs don't immediately attack, the zombie rises and slowly walks toward them, laughing crazily the whole time. If it is turned (highly likely), it flees through the curtain and tries to get to the hallway (room 23).

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23. Hidden Hallway: This hallway is a hidden access to the throne room. The door connecting it to the gallery is quite visible and not a secret, but it is locked. The door to the hidden area behind the curtain is never locked. It has special hinges that allow it to open with complete silence. Azalin, or others, can enter or leave the throne room through the hidden hallway without being seen by those in the waiting room.

There is a secret door in this hallway. It opens into a narrow tunnel that bores right through the stone bulwark of the central keep wall. This tunnel is only 3 feet wide and 7 feet tall. A normal man can walk through it, but an armored man must turn sideways.

24. Tower Room: This is the second section of the hanging tower. Its staircases run from the second floor to the sixth floor, 75 feet up. The topmost floor is a dead end.

25. Gate Towers: These towers are strictly for defensive purposes. Since Castle Avernus will almost certainly never fall under siege, these towers are simply for show. The bases of the towers are solid stone. In a normal castle, the rooms on this level would hold war supplies, such as weapons, pitch to be boiled, etc. In this case, the rooms are empty. Curving staircases allow access to the next level. A doom guard patrols here. Its circuit starts in one of these rooms. It then goes up into room 26, over to the other tower, and down again.

26. Gate Towers: This level is much the same as the one below it (room 25). A hallway connects the two tower rooms, with several arrow slits facing both in and out. In the center of this corridor is a metal plate on the floor. It reveals a murder hole that looks down on the main gate, used to fire arrows or drop things down upon attackers. A doom guard patrols here. Its circuit starts in room 25. It walks up into this room, over to the other tower, and down again.

27. West Bailey Outer Wall: This short wall is patrolled by a doom guard. Only the door to the main keep is locked.

28. Landing: The grand stair ends on this level. A narrower stair leads up to the next level. The walls are tastefully decorated and the floor is carpeted.

29. Inner Bailey Wall: This hallway leads to a tunnel that cuts through the inner bailey wall. The tunnel is 5 feet wide, with densely packed arrow slits. Behind each arrow slit is a round, wooden lid on the floor. If lifted, it reveals a small murder hole that just barely overhangs the wall. This area is patrolled by a pair of skeletons at all times. Since they are so easily turned or destroyed, their combat abilities are not provided.

30. Room of Enchantment: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all enchantment/charm spells cast here take effect as if the caster were two levels higher. All saving throws vs. such spells are made at a -2 penalty here.

A long shelf against the south wall holds all the spell components necessary to cast any enchantment spell. Any creature that enters this room is subject to an *emotion* spell, attempting to cause fear. Since undead are immune to this spell, it has no effect on the majority of the castle's inhabitants.

31. Room of Conjunction: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all conjunction/summoning spells cast in this room take effect as if the caster were 2 levels higher. Any casting on the staircase or while flying or levitating is considered to be within the room. All saving throws vs. these spells are made at a -2 penalty.

A long shelf against the west wall holds all the spell components necessary to cast any conjunction spell. This is where Azalin performs some of his most potent magic, for *wish* spells are of the conjunction school. If the characters are not carrying a light source that extends at

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least 60 feet, do not read the balcony description in brackets.

The room is immense—a huge cylinder rising into impenetrable shadows high above. One wall is flat, cutting off the cylinder. A massive pillar thrusts skyward in the center of the circle only a few steps from the flat wall. The pillar is so thick it would take a dozen men linking hands to encircle it. A spiral stair wraps around the pillar, interrupted only to join a walkway to a balcony on the flat wall, high overhead. A wide circle is engraved in the floor and covered with strange runes. The pillar is inside its arc, but closer to the edge than the center.

The curving wall of the room is dotted with dozens of small doors. Age-worn lettering is stamped into each one, unreadable at this distance. The doors of the lowest row are twice the height of a man. [At the edge of your light, high overhead, a small balcony overlooks this mammoth room.]

The room is indeed immense, spanning five levels of the tower. The ceiling is 75 feet above the floor, beyond the range of a *continual light* spell, let alone torches. The pillar is 20 feet wide and rises almost the entire distance of the room, stopping short of the ceiling by 15 feet, apparently ending in midair. This is apparent only after the PCs have climbed 10 or 15 feet up the stairs (or they have a light source that reaches 75 feet).

The characters are actually looking up through the invisible floor of the room above this one (room 55). The spiral stairs wind around the pillar and form the only entrance to the level above.

Any attempt to fly up to the top of the pillar or to the small landing area between the doors (see room 55 description) results in the character slamming into the invisible ceiling. There is very little chance that the character will safely pass through one of the entry holes.

The PC suffers 3d6 points of damage from the collision and must make a save vs. breath weapon or be knocked unconscious. An unconscious character will then fall 60 feet and suffer 6d6 points of damage upon landing.

A large, powerful magic circle has been permanently carved into the floor, encircling the pillar. Two levels above the floor, a catwalk leads to a wide balcony on one side. Near the top of the room is a small balcony. Behind it, out of sight until a PC is halfway up the stairs, is a door.

On all levels but the first, the curved portion of the tower wall is filled with doors. No ledge or stairs provides access to them. Behind each door is a small room that is the tomb of a wraith or spectre. The name, birth date, and death date of the person are inscribed on the door. One of the doors on the topmost level is inscribed with a *symbol* of fear. Behind this door is a short hall leading to the Room of Invocation (room 50).

The undead will attack any living creature that ascends the stair or attempts to fly or levitate past that point. They will wait for their attacks until the party is about halfway up (even with the balcony level). The wraiths and spectres have free reign to roam anywhere in the castle, but tend to stay in this room and the necromancy room. They will swarm any isolated character, such as a PC who is flying or levitating.

Even here in Castle Avernus, the wraiths will be relatively easy to turn by a 9th-12th level cleric. A single *continual light* spell will drive them all away instantly. The spectres will be tougher. Any turned undead flee the tower through the balcony at the top that leads outside.

The biggest problem the characters face is Skeever the imp. He will attempt to cast *darkness 15' radius* from the balcony onto the characters when they are halfway up the stairs. The sudden darkness will allow the wraiths to swarm the PCs.

Spectres (5): Int Very; AC 2; MV 15, FI 30 (B); HD 7+3; hp 35 each; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA energy drain 2 levels; SD hit only by

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+1 or better weapons, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *death*, and cold based spells; SZ M (6'); ML 15; XP 3,000; AL LE.

Wraiths (40): Int Very; AC 4; MV 12, FI 24 (B); HD 5+3; hp 25 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA energy drain 1 level; SD hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *death*, and cold based spells; SZ M (6'); ML 15; XP 3,000; AL LE.

32. Empty Room: The walls of this room are cold, bare stone.

33. Incantation Room: Just off the library, this room is designed for minor incantations and petty magics. A magic circle has been etched into the stone floor. Vile stains are burned into the stone itself. A table in the corner is empty. Azalin uses it to hold books, usually from the library, and spell components while he is using this room.

34. Library: This modest library holds a collection of histories of the various domains, including Darkon. For example, a copy of the *Tome of Strahd* exists here. Since the domains of Ravenloft have been in existence for only a short time, historically speaking, there isn't much to say.

A great many of these books are historical essays with titles such as *The Waning of Aerdy*, *Rulers of the House of Rax*, *The Age of Sorrow*, *The Rain of Colorless Fire*, *The Battle of a Fortnight's Length*, *The Battle of Shamblefield*, *People of the Blemu Hills*, *Unique Creatures of the Adri Forest*, *Wee Folk of the Flinty Hills*, *My Travels Down the Teesar and Harp Rivers*, etc. All of these books are about local regions of the Flanaess (see the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® campaign setting for further details).

A dedicated search of at least an hour, specifically looking through these historical works about the Flanaess, will unearth a copy of Azalin's life story. This is different from the book found in the Hall of Records (see above), but it has the same relevant passages. Tucked

inside the volume is a loose sheet of paper, torn from a diary penned by Azalin himself. Give the players a copy of the *Book of Firan Zal'honan* found in the back of this adventure. This is the second handout in the back of this booklet.

In addition to the historical works, there are many books on occult topics, including Van Richten's famous volumes. There are also many magical books, but no spellbooks. If six people search for half an hour, they get one roll on Table 95: Misc. Magic Books, Librams, Manuals, Tomes in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. A *detect magic* spell will speed this up considerably. Elzarath, the ghostly librarian, can find any single work in a couple of rounds. However, he will find books for the PCs only if they have been nice to him, and even then, no more than one magical book.

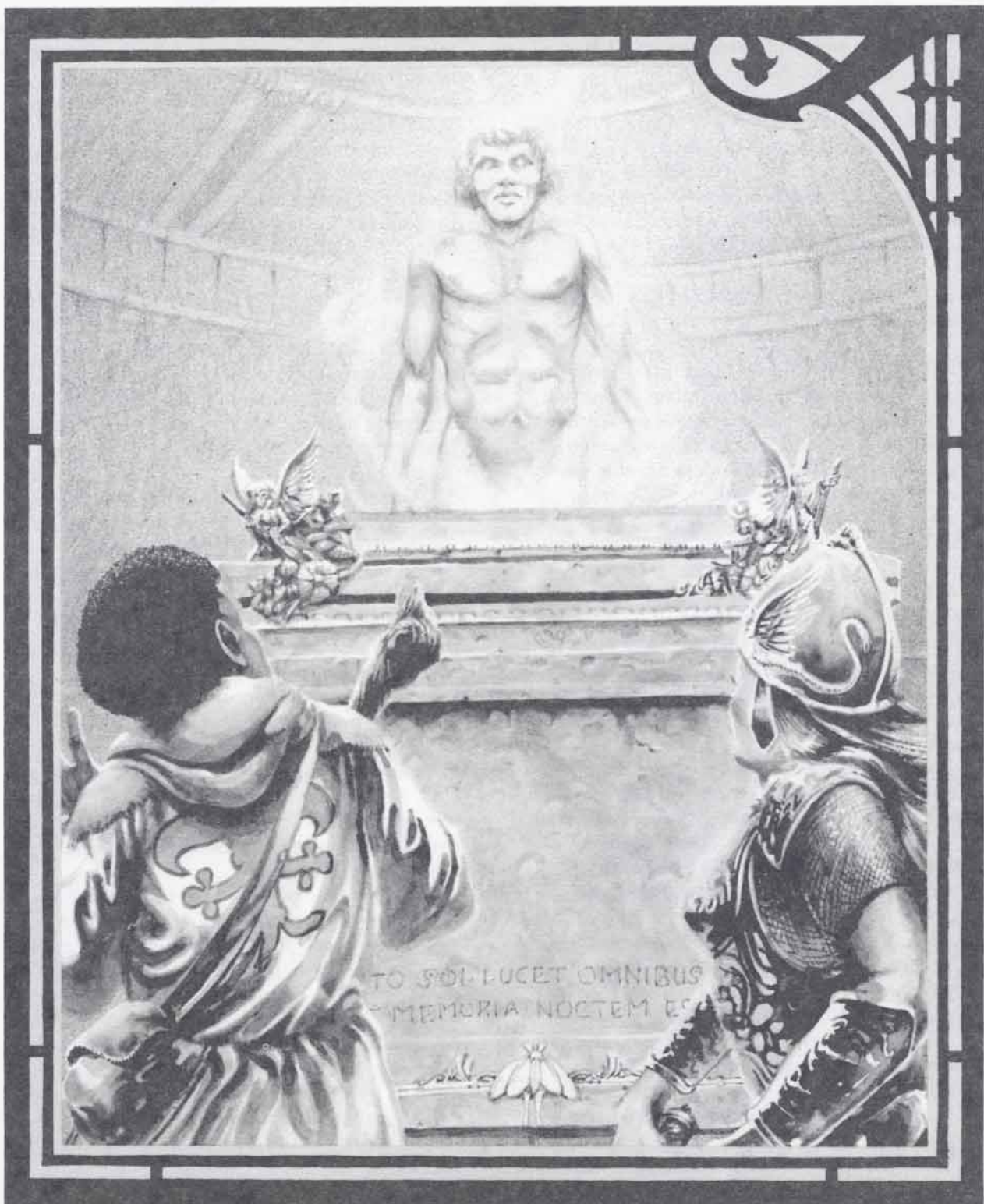
35. Guest Rooms: These suites are bedrooms and temporary living quarters for the few normal, living visitors that Azalin must occasionally entertain. They are all empty at this time. Three of these rooms have secret doors that grant access to a hidden corridor (room 36). Occasionally, Azalin has needed surreptitious entrance to a guest's room.

36. Inner Bailey Wall: This dusty, cobweb-filled hallway runs through the castle wall that surrounds the inner bailey. It is lined with arrow slits. Each arrow slit has a hole, covered with a wooden lid, that looks down over the wall. This overhang allows deadly objects to be rained down upon besiegers.

Unlike the inner wall of the lower level, the corridor is fairly broad here. It is patrolled by a pair of skeletons at all times. Since they are so easily turned or destroyed, their combat abilities are not provided.

37. Room of Abjuration: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all abjuration spells cast here are done so as if the caster were two levels higher. All saving throws vs. abjurations suffer a -2 penalty here. A long shelf against the straight southwest wall has all the spell components

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necessary to cast any abjuration spell. The entire room has a permanent *protection from good* spell affecting it. Anyone of good alignment suffers -2 penalties to attack rolls. Any attacks by these characters that require saving throws allow evilly aligned creatures a +2 bonus on the saving throw.

38. Outer Bailey Wall: This tunnel connects the gate towers to the main keep. It is patrolled by a doom guard.

39. Gate Towers: The rooms on Level 6 are empty. There are stairs in each tower leading both up and down. A hallway connects the two tower rooms. In the middle of the hall is an alcove with two murder holes. The holes have heavy metal plates covering them. The twin holes look down over the outside of the gateway. In a normal castle, these would be used to drop burning pitch on anyone in front of the gate. This area is patrolled by the doom guards.

40. Room of Wild Magic: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all wild magic spells cast here are done so as if the caster were 2 levels higher. All saving throws vs. wild magic suffer a -2 penalty here. A small shelf against the west wall has all the spell components necessary to cast any wild magic spell. The floor is an eye-straining, multicolored mess. To make matters worse, it slowly changes, with various colors oozing and shifting across it.

Any spell cast in this room, regardless of school, has a 10% chance of causing a wild surge. This is in addition to any rolls that a wild mage must make for his spells.

Azalin hates this room. His curse is that he may never learn new magic. Wild magic is a relatively new phenomenon and he is unable to learn it or understand it in any way. He keeps the door to this room *wizard locked* at all times. The archlich will not attack or approach the characters in here. He is uncomfortable with the unstable nature of all spells that are cast here.

41. Gate Towers: This level holds the watch rooms for the gate towers.

The room is filled with unusually thick spider webs. They are so dense that it is impossible to see more than a dozen feet into them. Strangely, the webs do not come within more than a pace or two of the wall. The curving stone of the outer wall is punctured by arrow slits every few feet.

There is a clear path along the wall, encircling the entire floor. This path is created by the doom guard patrols as they make their rounds. The animated armors peer out of each and every arrow slit as they walk the tower. The path is just wide enough to accommodate one character. Treat anyone falling into the webs as if affected by a *web* spell.

If a spider has been foolish enough to spin a web across the pathway, the doom guard cuts through it. The spiders have learned over the years that these armored figures are immune to their poisonous bite. Occasionally, they still attack a doom guard, which almost always results in the death of the spider.

If the PCs spend more than a couple of rounds here, the spiders attack them. They attack unarmored characters and try to web the armored ones. There are about two dozen spiders spread throughout these towers, but only a few attack at a time.

Any flames in this area will ignite the webs and in turn, the dry timbers of the roof. The fire will not spread, since the castle is largely stone, but Azalin will have to build a new roof here. The first round of fire does only one point of damage to each character in it. The next round does 1d6, the next 2d6, then 3d6, etc. The spiders are a nuisance encounter, but a fire could be deadly.

Spiders, Large (6): Int Animal; AC 8; MV 6, Web 15; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA poison (type A, save at +2 or suffer 15 pts dmg), webbing; SZ S (2'); ML 7; XP 175; AL N.

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42. Outer Bailey Walk: This is the top of the high wall that overlooks the outer bailey. It is patrolled by doom guards. The door that connects to the abjuration room (37) is locked.

43. Room of Necromancy: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all necromantic spells cast here are done so as if the caster were 2 levels higher. All saving throws vs. necromancy spells suffer a -2 penalty here. A long shelf against the northwest wall has all the spell components necessary to cast any necromancy spell. Any attempt to turn undead here is done so at a -2 penalty, in addition to the overall -2 penalty of Castle Avernus.

There is an open balcony that spans the entire southwest wall, overlooking the conjuration room. A railed catwalk bridges the short gap to the thick central pillar with its spiral stair. If the characters are attacked by the wraiths and spectres from that room, they might retreat here. Such a retreat plays right into the hands of these undead monsters, since they are harder to turn here. The stairs that curl around the central pillar lead to the treasury on the next floor.

There is a secret door behind the shelf that leads to the hanging tower. It can be found only if the characters specifically say that they are searching the shelf or behind it, or trying to move the shelf while searching for secret doors. A normal search of the room will not reveal this secret door.

44. Room of Elemental Magic: One of the 10 rooms of magic, this is somewhat different from the rest. Elemental magic is not a single school like the others. It is composed of four areas of specialization, one for each of the primary elements.

The south end of this room is the focus of the special elements. There are four square plots, separated from each other by a 10-foot-wide walkway. Each square is filled with the appropriate element. The water square is a shallow pool of bloody water about two feet deep. The earth square is a pit of dirt of the

same depth. The fire square is shallow and filled with ash. The skeletal remains of a human are hidden beneath the dust, and in the center is a small brazier with a burning fire. The remainder of the pit is surrounded by oil-soaked logs. Contact with any source of flame will ignite them.

The air square is outlined by a line carved into the stone. It is otherwise empty. It has direct access to an arrow slit, providing an unlimited supply of air.

The following passage should be read when the PCs first enter the room, assuming that they can see only the first 40 to 60 feet of it.

This room is quite long and wide. To your left are four shelves, stocked with many strange powders, liquids, and bizarre objects. To your right is an orderly stack of barrels.

Once the PCs are able to see the back part of the room, they should hear the following.

Four squares are laid out on the floor with broad pathways between them. A circle carved in the floor and inscribed with strange runes is centered between the squares, so that one corner of each square touches its curving edge. The nearest square on the left is a pool of ominous, dark red fluid. The thick smell of oil wafts past you. The near square on the right is a pit of dirt. You can see a few bleached white bones protruding from the soil.

The far left square is an empty area on the floor, outlined by a line chiseled into the stone. The far right square is a shallow pit, haphazardly filled with firewood. Bones can be seen mixed in with the lumber. In its center, a brass bowl contains a burning fire.

In the center, touching a corner of each plot, is a magic circle. A true elemental wizard can stand in this circle and cast *any* elemental

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magic spell, even one from an element that opposes his own. He does so as if two levels higher than normal, and anyone saving against one of his elemental spells suffers a -2 penalty.

Four long shelves against the east wall hold all the spell components necessary to cast any elemental magic spell. There is one shelf for each element. Stacked along the opposite, curved wall are barrels of supplies that might be needed in large quantity. They hold dirt, water, various types of flammable oil, etc.

The ceiling is a peaked roof, about 45 feet high in the center. Several large timbers cut across the empty space and support the massive roof. An inverted cone of stone grows out of the curved west wall. This is the base of the vampire tower.

Although elemental magic is a relatively new school of magic, Azalin is still able to cast some spells here. However, he cannot take advantage of the magic circle. The archlich also does not bear the hatred for this room that he does for the wild magic room.

From the magic circle, Azalin is able to summon Ravenloft elementals (alternate: ordinary elementals). Try as he might, he is unable to summon elementals of any other sort. As long as he stays within the circle, control over them is automatic.

Azalin has summoned a grave elemental and a blood elemental (alternates: earth and water elementals) to act as guardians in this room. He tried keeping one elemental of each type here, but the elementals always attacked their opposite (fire & water, earth & air). He now settles for two. The grave elemental will not attack the castle structure. Neither elemental can leave this room.

Elemental, Grave (1): Int Low; AC 0; MV 6; HD 12; hp 55; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 4d10; SA *sink*; SZ L (12' tall); ML 16; XP 7,000; AL N.

Elemental, Blood (1): Int Low; AL N; AC 0; MV 12; HD 12; hp 55; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6; SA blood drain, smother; SZ L (12' tall); ML 16; XP 7,000.

45. Inner Bailey Wall: This broad walkway has battlements overlooking the countryside. Its inner edge has no protective railing. It is a 60-foot drop to the inner bailey below. This wall is patrolled by a pair of doom guards, walking in opposite directions.

46. Golem Room: This is where Azalin builds his golems. Before he was installed as the lord of Darkon, the archlich discovered how to make bone golems and zombie golems. They are quite difficult to create and the process takes a long time. To make matters worse, Azalin does not always have time to devote to them. Once every decade or so, he completes a golem and sends it out on a special quest, or keeps it in the castle to serve as a special guardian.

This room looks like a slaughter house. Piles of body parts stretch beyond the edge of your light. The smell of decaying flesh is overpowering.

In the middle of all this carnage is a table, bearing a horror beyond comprehension. A madman has been sewing these rotting body parts together! They are not joined in any rational way that would form a human body. Arms are strapped together to form a leg, a head is attached where the stomach should be, etc. It is the work of a deranged mind.

The piles of body parts are actually sorted neatly—arms here, legs there, etc. Piles of dried human bones are also sorted by type. In the middle of all this are two large tables. One bears a partially assembled zombie golem, the other a partially assembled bone golem. A third, smaller table stands between the two. It is covered with dozens of sharp tools and other instruments necessary to build the golems.

The sight of this room is cause for a horror check. Anyone attempting to closely examine the zombie golem on the table or search through the piles of body parts must make another horror check.

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Azalin has kept a zombie golem here as a servant and guardian (alternate: eight Strahd zombies). When the archlich doesn't immediately need this servant, the golem sits lifeless in a corner of the room. Anyone glancing over the room will fail to notice the golem, since it looks like another pile of body parts. If anyone approaches it or specifically declares to be examining the piles of body parts, then the characters notice the golem.

The golem will attack anyone disturbing anything in this room. If the characters walk through, looking but not touching, the golem is not activated.

Golem, Zombie: Int Non; AC 2; MV 6; HD 18; hp 60; THAC0 4; #AT 2; Dmg 3d6/3d6; SA 30' aura of decay; SD +2 weapon to hit, *animate dead* restores all hp, immune to mind and life spells, immune to poison; SZ M (6' tall); ML 20; XP 17,000; AL N.

47. Gate Tower Roof: This roof level is simply open wooden timbers, filled with spider webs. The roof is 30 feet high from base to top. The large spiders that live here feed primarily on bats, birds, and rats.

48. Treasury: This is Azalin's second treasury. Like the first, it has little need of guardians. Azalin does not care much about wealth, and few thieves would dare break into his castle, let alone survive the experience. The only entrance is through the stairway in the room of necromancy.

This treasury is reserved for finer types of wealth. Nothing so crude as coinage is found here. Rare paintings hang on the walls, intricately woven carpets are tightly rolled and stacked on the floor, and statuary is scattered everywhere. The value of any given piece is 1d100 × 10 gp. If the characters start packing away treasure, stress their awkwardness and bulk. There is far more here than they can ever hope to carry. All encumbrance rules apply.

Seven small chests are tucked away in various odd corners. Six contain 3d6 gems of

varying quality. Like the coins in the other treasury, a minor curse is placed on these. The curse functions only if the gems are removed from Castle Avernus without Azalin's permission. There is a 50% chance each time a gem is handled that the image of Azalin will be seen within its crystalline depths. This is cause for a fear check, even outside the demiplane of Ravenloft.

The seventh chest contains a priest scroll with the following spells: *heal*, *restoration*, *raise dead*, *resurrection*.

49. Velvet Cage: This room is a special prison cell. From the inside, it looks like the private bedroom of a princess. A large bed with silk sheets dominates the room, and an exquisite bathtub hides coyly behind a delicately painted screen. The walls are covered with bright, cheery tapestries. A small table and a few chairs, all elegantly crafted, stand near a fireplace. A wardrobe closet contains an assortment of fine clothing for both men and women. A shelf holds books and writing papers behind delicate glass doors. All the books are commonplace histories and great works of fiction.

Azalin uses this room as a prison cell for his more genteel captives. Those people whose minds would snap too quickly in the torture chambers are kept here for more subtle and delicate questioning. A trap door in the floor leads to the circular stairway (and freedom), but it is barred from the underside. The room is currently empty.

50. Room of Invocation: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all invocation spells cast here are done so as if the caster were 2 levels higher. All saving throws vs. invocations suffer a -2 penalty here. A long shelf against the west wall holds all the spell components necessary to cast any invocation spell.

51. Room of Alteration: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all alteration spells cast here are done so as if the caster were 2 levels higher. All

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saving throws vs. alterations suffer a -2 penalty here. A long shelf against the south wall holds all the spell components necessary to cast any alteration spell. In the center of the room is an iron ring with several chains hooked to it. Each ends in a manacle suitable for restraining prisoners.

Cages line the east and west walls of this room. Each cage holds an animal or monster. All are victims of Azalin's *polymorph* spells. Most are actually humans and demihumans. As a result, each animal or monster radiates magic if the characters detect for it. Stacked cages on the east wall hold small, innocuous animals: mice, rabbits, frogs, cats, snakes, bats, moles, and so on.

The eight 10' x 10' cages on the west wall hold the larger or more dangerous animals. One cage is empty. The table below shows *polymorphed* forms and true forms of each animal.

Polymorphed	True Form
Dairy cow	4th-level paladin, female
Tenebrous worm	Carpet merchant, male
Gremishka	9th-level enchantress
Baboon	Barmaid
Mongrelman	3rd-level thief, male
Giant leech	Tax collector, male
Halfling female	Mind flayer

If released from her enchantment, the paladin is most grateful. Her name is Rose, and she will gladly join the party. She is unarmed and unarmored. The carpet merchant is a fat slug of a man with an annoying whine.

Coryn is a chaotic evil, 9th-level enchantress who is being punished by Azalin for minor infractions. She claims to be a housewife, married to a scribe who besmirched Azalin's name. She will wait for an opportune moment to escape, preferably with a magical item or two. If the party confronts Azalin, her fear of the archlich will cause her to instantly attack the PCs, hoping to get back in his good graces.

Coryn has no spellbooks or equipment.

Unless one of the PCs lends her a spellbook, she is unable to memorize or cast spells.

Winaya the barmaid is a work-worn, middle-aged woman. If ever called upon to make a fear or horror check, she faints dead away for 2d6 rounds, but suffers no other ill effects.

Slippery Siv was once a proud burglar until he stole a small statuette that Azalin coveted. Now he is a frightened weasel of a man whose loyalty shifts with the wind. He will stay with the party only as long as they provide him safety.

Milarn is a pompous tax collector who cheated the Kargat. As punishment, they gave him to Azalin as a gift.

The mind flayer will attack instantly if returned to its true form. It knows that the characters will not allow it to live.

If any of these characters joins the party, they function basically as meat. If the DM must kill a party member to illustrate a point, these characters are the perfect choice. Azalin will always attack them first.



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Rose, 4th-Level Paladin: Int Very; AC 9; MV 12; HD 4; hp 25; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (+1 for Str); SD prot. from evil 10' rad., detect evil 60', +2 to all saves, immune to disease, heal 8 hp by touch; SZ M; ML 17; AL LG.

Coryn, 9th-Level Enchantress: Int High; AC 10; MV 12; HD 9; hp 24; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon (-1 for Str); SA spells (5/4/4/3/2); SZ M; ML 13; AL CE.

Slippery Siv, 3rd-Level Thief: Int Avg; AC 10; MV 12; HD 3; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA backstab x2 dmg; SZ M; ML 9; AL CN.
Thief Skills: PP 40%; OL 40%; F/RT 32%; MS 25%; HS 15%; HN 20%; CW 80%; RL 0%.

Mind Flayer: Int Genius; AC 5; MV 12; HD 8+4; hp 26; THAC0 11; #AT 4; Dmg nil; SA eat brain in 1d4 rounds (instant death), mental blast (60' x 20' cone) save vs. wands or be stunned, spells as 7th-level mage (*suggestion, charm person, ESP, levitate*, save at -4 penalty); SZ M (6' tall); ML 15; XP 8,000; AL LE.

52. Vampire Tower: This lonely tower is part of the home of Aquinus, a vampire servant of Azalin. Although servitude to the archlich grates upon him, his fear is far greater than his hatred. Aquinus is utterly loyal, knowing that a horrible fate is assured if he were ever to betray the archlich. Some things are even feared by a vampire.

The tower is a series of small rooms, connected only by small holes in the ceiling, (the floor of the room above). The rooms are universally dusty and filled with cobwebs.

On the lowest level of the tower, adjacent to the divination room, there is a small crack in the stonework that connects the two rooms. Any dwarf that examines the walls is guaranteed to discover the crack. The crack is only a few feet long and a fraction of an inch wide. This is just enough to allow the vampire's gaseous form to enter and leave. This lowest

room is also where Aquinus's coffin is concealed.

53. Room of Divination: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all divination spells cast here are done so as if the caster were 2 levels higher. All saving throws vs. divinations cast within this room suffer a -2 penalty. A long shelf against the north wall holds all the spell components necessary to cast any divination spell.

In the center of this room is a wide, shallow pool of clear water. Floating a few feet above the pool is a crystal ball measuring 5 feet in diameter. Hanging on the southwest wall is an immense mirror, fully 40 feet wide and 10 feet high. The pool and the mirror are used for scrying.

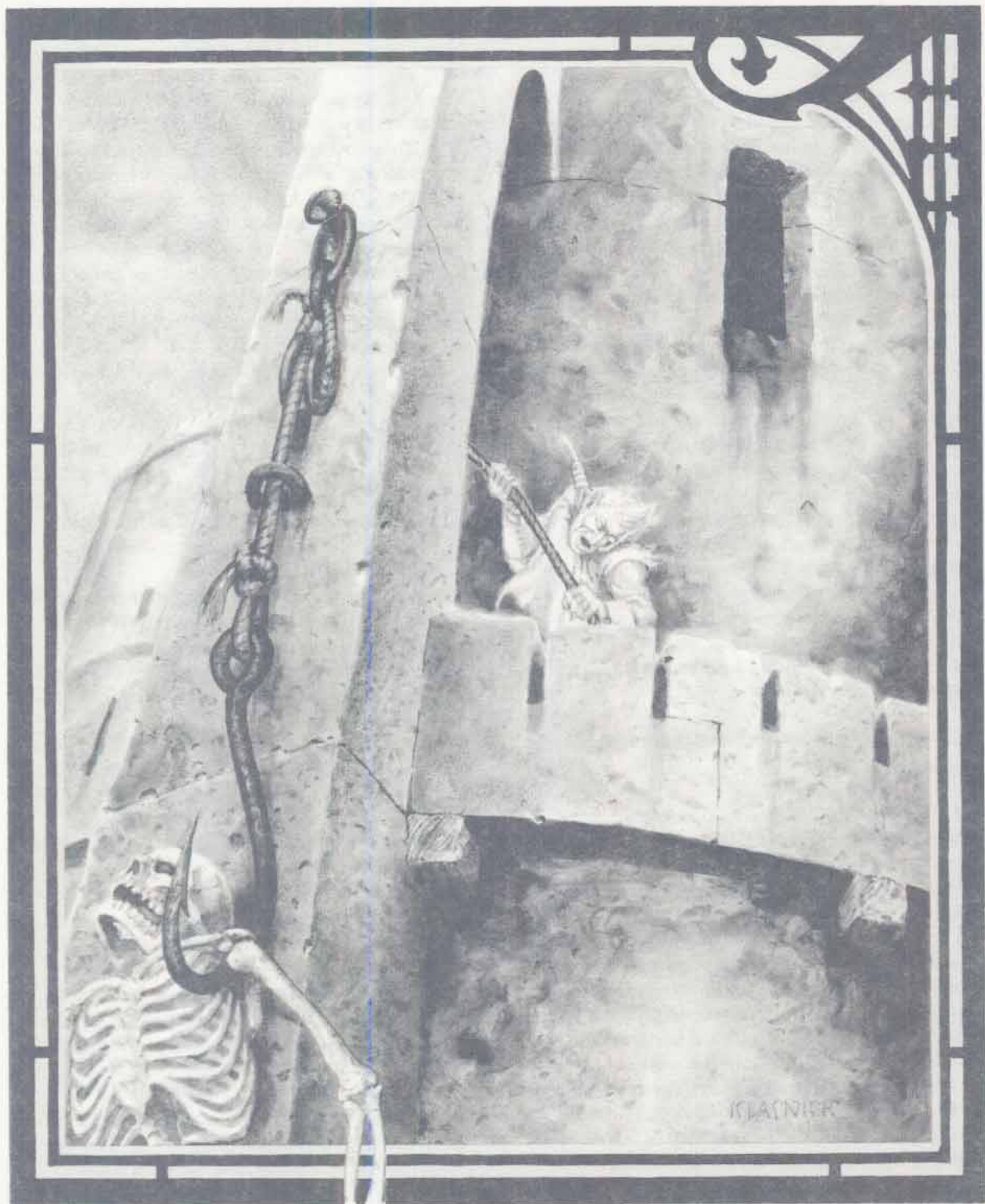
The crystal ball acts as the typical magical item. Simply by concentrating, the characters can use it. The DM should read the description of the *crystal ball* in the DMG carefully. Unlike most *crystal balls*, this one can focus on domain lords. With it, Azalin is able to occasionally spy upon the other domain lords.

The archlich can sense anyone viewing him through the *crystal ball*. He is able to mentally reach out and attempt to *charm* anyone who uses it to spy on him. Roll for this secretly, and tell the player only if the *charm* attempt failed. In that case, the character was able to feel the insidious attention of the lich as it tried to invade his mind. If the character fails his save, he should be told about Azalin's current activity, but nothing else. Later in this adventure when the PCs confront Azalin, that character will turn traitor and attack his comrades.

54. Hanging Tower: This tower room is empty.

55. Room of Illusion: One of the 10 rooms of magic, all illusion spells cast here take effect as if the caster were 2 levels higher. All saving throws vs. illusions suffer a -2 penalty here. A long shelf against the west wall holds all the spell components necessary to cast any illusion spell. The shelf of spell components appears to

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be bolted to the wall. Any spell designed to dispel or reveal illusions will not work here, but it is possible to disbelieve them.

The floor of this room is completely transparent. Only the top of the 20-foot diameter pillar, which lies even with the floor, and the area between the doors are visible. Anyone standing there looks down 60 feet to the floor of the conjuration room. The floor is quite solid and can be walked on safely, even by the heaviest of creatures. The ceiling and walls are smooth, yielding no place to secure ropes or grappling hooks.

To make matters worse, there are curved holes in the invisible floor. Of course, it is impossible to detect a hole in an invisible floor. Anyone falling through such a hole suffers a 60-foot fall (6d6 damage). Any remaining wraiths and spectres will descend upon a falling character like a black swarm. All such creatures that were turned during a combat in the conjuration room can return to attack.

Skeever could decide to use his *improved phantasmal force* spell here. It will work particularly well, since it is an illusion spell. Any character fleeing the sight of Azalin is quite likely to fall into a hole and plummet into the conjuration room.

56. Attic: This area is filled with dust, cobwebs, and support timbers.

57. Hangman's Walk: This battlement encircles one of the large towers of the main keep. At the back of the tower is a stair that climbs to the top of the other tower of the main keep. As the walk rounds the Hanging Tower, it passes below an arch that forms part of the buttress for the tower. A large metal loop is mounted on the outside of the buttress, and a steel chain dangles from the loop. A second chain is attached to the loop and has a hook on the end, in easy reach of anyone on the walk.

Whenever Azalin wants to make an example of someone who has wronged him, he hangs him from the hook. Those guilty of minor infractions are hung by the neck from a rope.

Death is swift for them. After a few days, the rope is cut and the body tumbles to the base of the tower for the vultures. Serious offenders are hung on the hook itself, alive and kicking. Death comes slowly and painfully. After a few days, they too are dropped to the rocks below.

A doom guard constantly walks from one end of this wall to the other. However, the guard is not the most important inhabitant of the Hangman's Walk. A wrongly accused man, hung on the hook decades ago by Azalin, rose as an undead creature: a *valpurgeist* (alternate: ghost). It haunts Hangman's Walk, particularly around the arch.

Azalin takes amusement in letting it hang around. The archlich has commanded the *valpurgeist* to serve as his executioner. The undead wretch must hang or hook anyone Azalin has condemned to die. It assumes that any living creature on the walk must be hanged or hooked, and attacks them. Its morale is significantly higher than normal due to the power of Azalin's orders.

Seeing the *valpurgeist* with its broken neck and dangling head is cause for a horror check. If the DM is using a ghost instead of the *valpurgeist*, it is able to manipulate the chains and hook, but not any other physical objects.

Valpurgeist: Int Avg; AC 4; MV 9; HD 5; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6 (fists); SA strangulation (1d8 damage automatically); SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* and mind affecting spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML 17; XP 650; AL CE.

58a-d. Aquinus's Rooms: These rooms are home to the vampire Aquinus, described in room 52. That tower is where the vampire actually rests. These rooms allow him to live out a mortal masquerade. The rooms appear to be an elegant suite, decorated in an exquisite but subdued manner. Only the door leading to the tower and the door leading to the hallway are locked. The door leading to the main hall is also barred from the outside.

Room 58a is a study and drawing room.

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Room 58b is a small library. Nothing of great note or value is found here. Room 58c is a bedroom. The bed has never been used. Ironically, an arrow slit lets the morning sun shine on the mattress. The wardrobe closet contains fine clothes and an executioner's uniform complete with black hood.

Room 58d is a dining hall. It is something of a mockery, since Aquinus is the only resident of the suite and does not eat mortal food. At the back end of this room is the locked door to the tower (room 52).

If the characters enter these rooms, Aquinus will be in the study (room 58a). He will feign being a prisoner of Azalin. He refers to himself as Azalin's "reluctant guest." There is some cause to believe this, since the only obvious entrance to his rooms is locked and barred from the outside.

As a vampire, he has the ability to turn gaseous and seep under the door or turn into a bat and fly out the arrow slit. He is in no way a prisoner restricted to these rooms. Aquinus is a prisoner to his fear of Azalin.

Aquinas will make no overt attempt to harm or help the characters yet. However, he will try to *charm* one of them with his gaze. Roll the character's saving throw secretly, but tell the player only if the attempt failed. Aquinus's plan is to follow the PCs as a bat or in gaseous form. At some point, he hopes to get the charmed PC alone, then drain him. The Dungeon Master must decide when such an occasion presents itself.

Aquinas (vampire): Int Except; AC 1; MV 12, Fl 18 (B); HD 8+3; hp 40; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4; SA energy drain, *charm* gaze, shapechange, *spider climb*; SD gaseous form, hit only by +1 or better weapons, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and mind affecting spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML 16; XP 3,000; AL LE.

59. Execution Chamber: This large, open room is filled with devices used to execute prisoners. These include a guillotine, an impaling spear, a medieval dunk tank (for drownings), a

chopping block and executioner's axe, an iron pole surrounded by dry firewood (for burnings), and so on. The only obvious method of execution missing is a gallows. That action always takes place on the hanging tower for all to see.

Most persons executed here are hung on the hook at some point, like carcasses in a butcher's shop. A single, large cell lies to the rear of the room, where prisoners await their fates. It is currently empty.

The vampire Aquinus serves as executioner for Azalin. He is detailed in rooms 52 and 58. The superhuman strength and powers of the vampire make him ideal for the task. Aquinus takes no pleasure in this job, since he is never allowed to drain the victims before slaying them.

60. Room of Silence: This barren room has a permanent *silence* spell cast upon it. No sound can be made or heard within its walls. Azalin comes here regularly to vent his rage and frustration, and on rare occasions, to confess his sins. He can speak freely without fear of anyone overhearing him. Although the lich cannot hear his own words, it is enough to feel himself saying them.

61. Tower Roof: There is no trapdoor or other entry into the lowest room of this tower. Azalin and Aquinus both use its rooftop to look out over the shrouded landscape of Darkon. Sometimes peasants in nearby villages can see a lone, brooding figure on the parapets, gazing outward.

62. Crypt of Irik Zal'honan: This is the burial crypt of Azalin's son. When the archlich first entered Ravenloft, his only child was still buried in his home plane. When Azalin stepped into the mists and Darkon was created, this crypt appeared. No creature, living or dead, knows for sure whether the crypt and body were transported to Ravenloft or if this is a replica created to taunt the archlich. Azalin believes it to be the true tomb of his son.

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Dim light from a ceiling sconce casts shadows into the far corners of this room. Dusty, moth-eaten tapestries hang from sagging rods on the walls. Centered under the light is a massive stone coffin. All sides of it are elaborately carved and sculpted.

The dim light is a *continual light* stone mounted into the ceiling sconce and veiled with a pane of yellow quartz. The shade of Azalin's dead son haunts this room. He will rise from the coffin only if a character approaches within 5 feet of it.

As you draw near the coffin, a white, transparent form rises up through the stone lid. Clearly, it is the spirit of someone long dead, and tendrils of fear begin to gnaw at the corners of your mind.

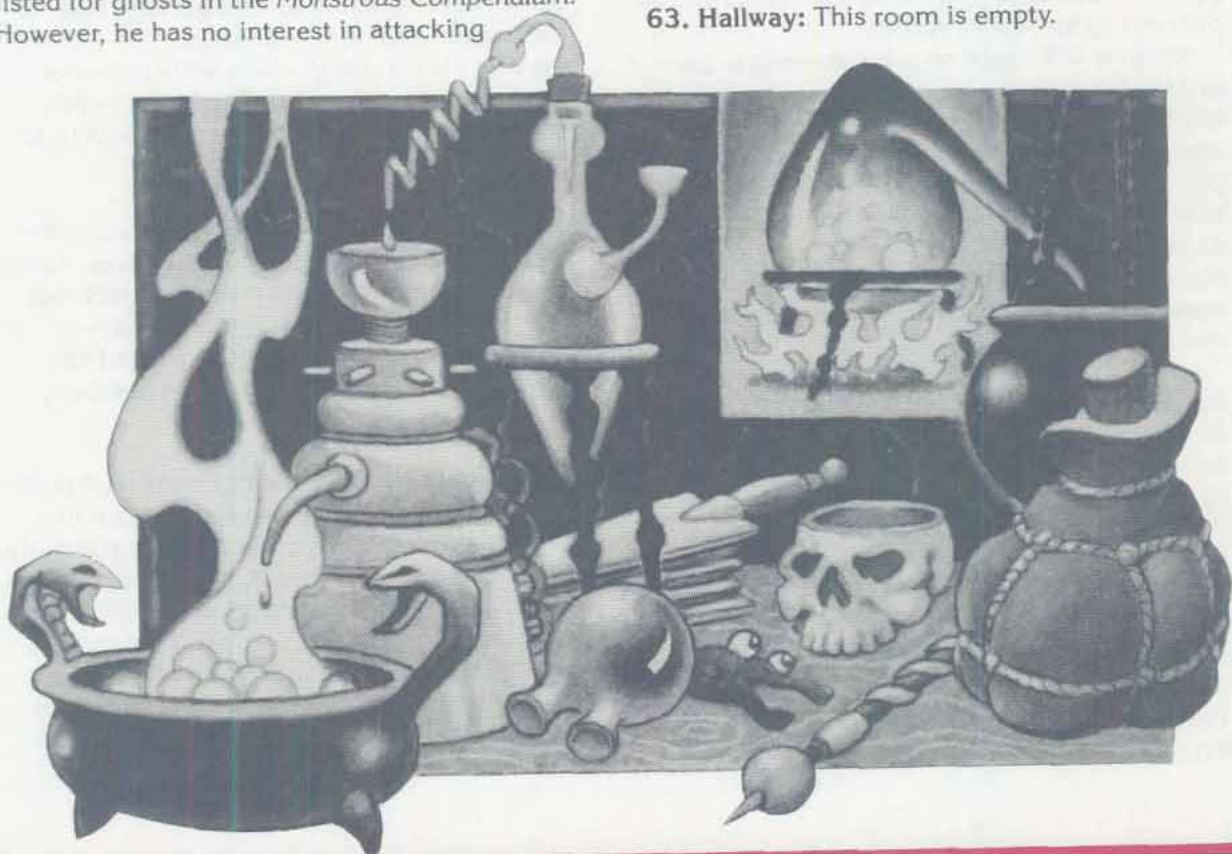
Irik is a full ghost, possessing all the powers listed for ghosts in the *Monstrous Compendium*. However, he has no interest in attacking

innocent strangers. He will use his supernatural powers only to defend himself. He will even ignore the first round of attacks, unless they seriously harm him.

Irik is a soul full of forgiveness and compassion, the exact opposite of his father. Irik is quite willing to talk to the characters. He can summarize everything in the two handouts at the back of this booklet. He alone, of all the creatures in Azalin's foul lair, knows where the phylactery is located. If asked, he will tell them that it is in a special room three floors above this one. Since he has never left his crypt, he has no idea what the room looks like or what defenses Azalin has installed.

Irik Zal'honan (ghost): Int High; AC 0; MV 9, Fl 9 (A); HD 10; hp 35; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA age 1d4 × 10 years, *magic jar*; SD hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons, immune to spells, body is ethereal; SZ M (5'5" tall); ML special; XP 7,000; AL LN.

63. Hallway: This room is empty.



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64. Shadow Lair: This huge room spans two floors of the tower. Its ceiling is nearly 30 feet high. At the south end of the room is a gaping, round hole, 25 feet in diameter. A railed balcony clings to the north wall, spanning the reach between the two small towers. At the center of this balcony is a 10-foot-long stone protrusion that is not railed. Azalin uses it to mount his dragon steed, Ebb, who makes his home here. The floor is covered in silver coins, a fitting bed for a dragon.

Ebb is an adult shadow dragon (alternate: black dragon) and Azalin's flying mount. Shadow dragons are native to Oerth and are described in the *Monstrous Compendium* for the GREYHAWK® campaign setting. Since Azalin is native to that realm, it makes sense that he would use a native creature as his personal steed.

Ebb hates most living creatures and cannot be negotiated with. Fortunately for the PCs, they can avoid this room by climbing the stairs on the outside of the tower.

Ebb is probably too tough an encounter for the characters at this point. Use her to frighten the characters rather than kill them. This dragon helps serve as an example of Azalin's power. Read this passage when they first enter the room.

The room is huge, clearly spanning more than one floor of the tower. A balcony hugs one wall, with several doorways on and under it. Opposite the balcony is a huge, round hole in the wall. It stands as tall as the mast on a sailing ship. The cavernous room is filled with shadows. The floor seems to glint and sparkle in the moonlight, except for a broad pool of darkness in the center. In the distance, you can hear tortured screams.

A large serpentine head arises from the shadowy pool on the floor. Slanted eyes glow like moonlight as they swivel to look directly at you. The soft rustling of leather can be heard as two enormous, batlike wings unfurl. A wave of supernatural fear washes over you.

Ebb does not attack immediately, giving the characters a chance to flee. She enjoys instilling fear in pathetic little humans almost as much as she enjoys devouring them. If the PCs flee, the shadow dragon does not pursue them. If they stick around for any reason, she unleashes her breath weapon.

From anywhere on this level of the castle and upward, the banshee's screams can be heard, even by non-elves. Her cries of agony provide a steady, terrifying backdrop from here on.

65. Hanging Tower: These two levels of the hanging tower connect into Ebb's lair.

66. Lower Keep Roof: This rooftop is patrolled by a pair of doom guards. The moans and shrieks of the banshee in its tower are easily heard here. Even non-elves can identify the banshee tower as the source of the awful cries. From anywhere on this level of the castle and upward, the banshee's screams can be heard, even by non-elves. Her cries of agony provide a steady, terrifying backdrop from here on.

67. Lower Banshee Tower: These two levels of the banshee tower open into Ebb's lair. A stairway leads upward, providing an entrance to the next floor. Willow, the banshee, cannot enter these two floors of the tower.

68. Upper Banshee Tower: This tower is haunted by a groaning spirit. In life, Willow was a strong-minded elf maiden. She entered the service of Azalin, drawn to the power that he could give her. She proved to be ruthless and bloodthirsty, rare traits for any elf. Unfortunately, she was also ambitious. Willow betrayed Azalin and he hung her on the hook to die (see room 57). He then raised her spirit as a banshee and forced her to inhabit his tower. She now serves as a warning to anyone who would betray Azalin.

Villagers for miles around can hear her constant cries of agony. Azalin made sure that the story of her betrayal and subsequent punishment was spread far and wide.

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throughout Darkon. Villagers believe that Willow is kept alive by Azalin's powerful magic to be eternally tortured. They do not realize that she is now an undead spirit.

Willow still appears as a beautiful, young elf maid, just as she was at the time of her death. However, she now has a huge, ghostly hook stuck in her back. Its point thrusts through the front of her chest. Like all groaning spirits, she is herself a ghostly, transparent figure.

Willow serves Azalin in death almost as well as she served him in life. He has bound her to this tower as the first guardian of his phylactery. There is no entrance to the phylactery room that does not go through her tower. As stated in the *Monstrous Compendium*, she can sense the presence of living creatures several miles away. There is no chance of slipping past her. Willow immediately attacks if the characters enter her tower. On the first round, she releases her death wail.

Willow (groaning spirit): Int Except; AC 0; MV 15, FI 15 (A); HD 7; hp 33; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA death wail, *fear aura*; SD hit only by +1 or better weapons, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, death magic, cold, electricity; MR 50%; SZ M (5'2"); ML 13; XP 4,000; AL CE.

69. Dead End Tower: This part of the hanging tower rises one level and ends in an empty room.

70. Hall of Life: This room is unusual for Castle Avernus. It is devoted to the principle of life, a concept almost alien to Azalin. The special properties of this room improve all healing or life-restoring spells. Healing spells always cure at their maximum effectiveness. All life-creating and restoring spells (*clone*, *simulacrum*, *raise dead*, *resurrection*, *regeneration*, *restoration*, *reincarnation*) work automatically, without normal penalties to the caster or to the target. No system shock rolls are necessary here.

Any undead creature loses one hit point every round it remains in this room. Azalin suffers extreme pain while in this room. Each

round, he loses a hit point and then regenerates it (a power granted by his imp familiar). However, his will is so strong that he has never flinched from entering this room and he makes no outward sign of the pain. The normal penalties of Castle Avernus (as a sinkhole of evil) do not apply here, unless Azalin himself is present.

A soft yellow glow comes from the walls of this room. You did not realize the full weight of the dread and despair that this foul castle placed upon you until just now. A small flame of hope is kindled in your heart.

Toward the rear of this huge, circular room are eight mist-shrouded pillars. Each rests upon a faceted, clear green stone as broad as a man's outstretched arms. A column of slowly shifting mists rises up from each gem, forming the pillars. As the mist touches the ceiling, it seems to dissipate. You see still, dark shapes hidden in light white vapors.

The stones and misty pillars form a circle several paces across. In the center is a square table covered with vials, jars, strange tools, and other devices. The room is otherwise devoid of furniture.

The green stones are magical emeralds of gigantic size. The generative power of these stones can take any bit of flesh and grow a clone from it, just like the *clone* spell. The emeralds are permanently fixed to the floor and cannot be removed or chipped.

Within each of the misty columns is a naked, teenaged clone of one of the player characters. It will be a month or more before they are fully grown.

The mists can easily be waved or fanned away from the bodies to reveal their faces. The mists reshroud the body within a round after a disturbance is removed.

Removing a body from the mists kills the clone, as will a simple sword thrust. Azalin will make no attempt to prevent this, since he has bits of the characters' flesh stored away

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elsewhere in the castle. He can grow new clones at any time if he so chooses.

The first character to wave the mists away from one of the bodies sees his own face. This requires an instant horror check. Roll randomly for the other pillars to determine which characters are there. A character seeing his own clone must make a horror check, although after the first character makes one, everyone else gets a +3 bonus. They already know what they will see, and they are not as shocked by the sight.

At the DM's option, the clone of any dead player can be discovered fully grown instead of young. Removing a fully grown clone from the mists is safe, and will awaken it within a few rounds. In this way, a player can recover his character. Of course, the character will have no memories since dying under the blade of the headless horseman.

If the player characters fail in their quest for Azalin, the archlich intends to use their clones to try again. However, Skeever the imp has a fiendishly clever and evil plan. He has placed a scroll on the table along with the odd devices, beakers of fluids, and spell components. If the characters attempt to read the scroll, give them the handout at the back of this booklet.

Skeever is trying to make the characters believe that *they* are just clones. Every character who reads or hears the contents of this false scroll must make a horror check. Comparing the scroll to any of the other written works of Azalin will instantly reveal it to be a forgery because the handwriting doesn't match at all.

71. Phylactery Room: It is no coincidence that this room sits directly above the Hall of Life. Although there is no known physical or magical connection, Azalin likes to think that in some way, his phylactery, which contains his life essence, is enhanced by being so close to the Hall of Life.

The only entrance to this room is through the Banshee Tower (room 68).

To your right is a straight, continuous wall. The rest of the huge room is round, roughly filling the entire tower's diameter. The walls are intricately carved and painted, many of the scenes drawn in silver and barely visible in the dull light. The floor and ceiling are plain, unadorned stone. There are no other doors or entrances.

In the center of the room, facing the flat wall, is a wide, round pedestal that rises waist high. Resting atop it is a golden dragon's skull. The only light in the room comes from a flickering flame visible in its partially open mouth. Its eyes glow a dull red, ominously reminiscent of Azalin's eyes.

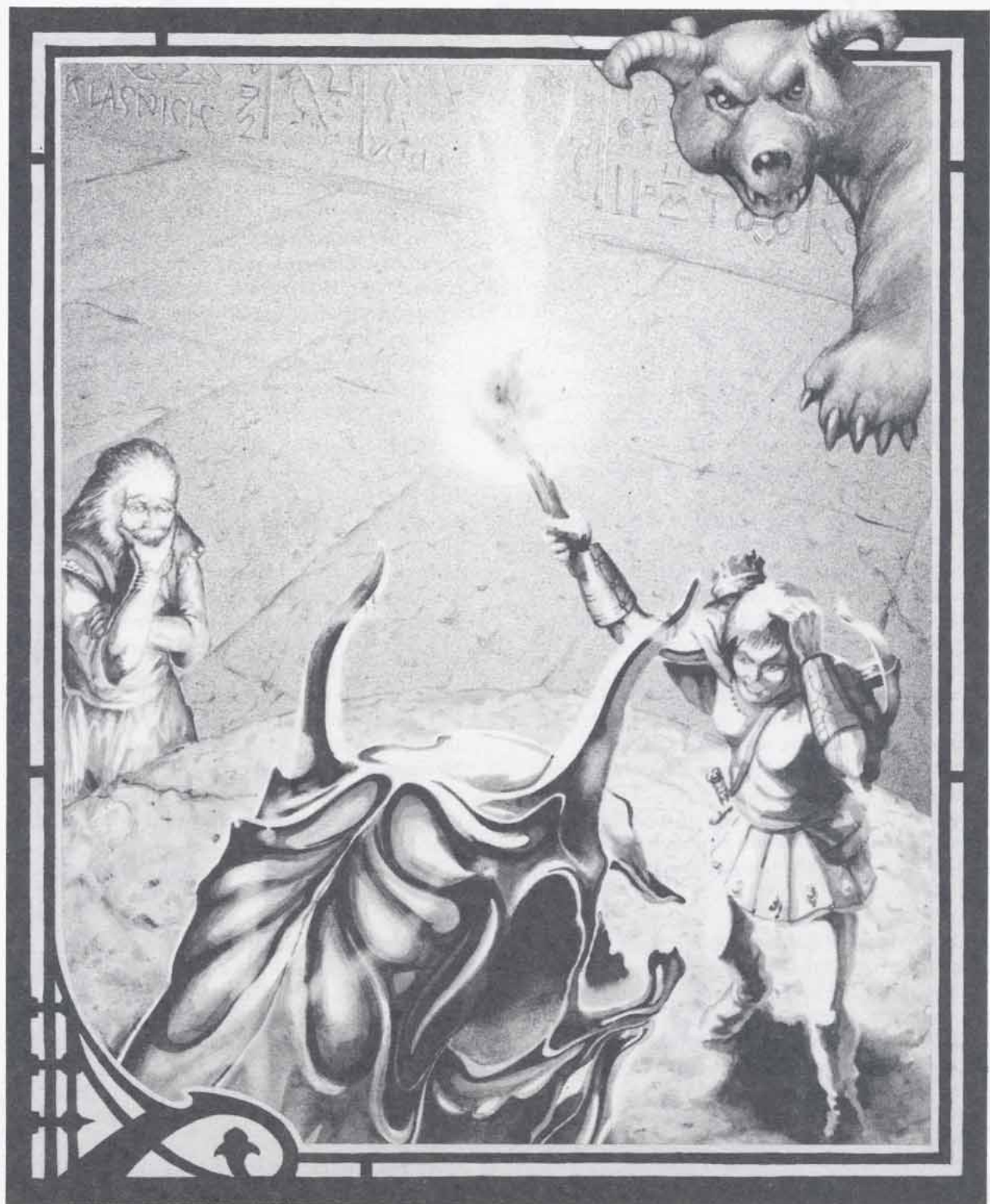
The paintings on the walls depict the life of Azalin in great detail. Each picture is captioned in Old Oeridian. Toward the middle of his life story is the scene showing him becoming a lich. His phylactery is displayed prominently as a gold-plated, shrunken skull on a chain around his neck. Toward the end of his life story, the pictures show his transition into the demiplane of Ravenloft. The skull is shown being altered magically to become a huge dragon skull, matching the one on the pedestal.

The dragon skull is that of a Greyhawk Dragon (see the GREYHAWK® campaign *Monstrous Compendium*) plated in gold. As a result, any attempt to identify the exact species of dragon fails unless a character is native to that realm.

Azalin's phylactery is this skull. As stated earlier, it was altered magically from an ordinary skull into this massive, almost immovable dragon skull. It stands as yet another symbol of Azalin's imprisonment here. The interior of the braincase contains all of the mystical writings necessary to make it a suitable vessel for Azalin's life essence. This phylactery cannot be opened or destroyed by any means available to the characters. Even dropping it from the top of Castle Avernus will not damage it.

An ever-burning flame, about the size of a

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torch flame, is set in the mouth. Its light is reflected through two rubies set as eyes, making them appear to glow. No amount of water, wind, or cold can extinguish the flame.

Next to the flame is a small, golden disc that can be removed from inside the dragon's mouth. It can be seen only by someone peering directly into the mouth of the skull from a close distance. Azalin placed the disc here after inscribing a message upon it. It is a cryptic reference to the concept that if Azalin (death that walks) touches this phylactery (life unmoving), he will be destroyed. Of course, Azalin himself designed this trap with the potential to kill him. It is all part of his grand scheme. Normally, his phylactery has no deadly affect upon him.

Should life unmoving touch death that walks, life must prevail, for golden life, even unmoving, is the nemesis of death.

The skull itself weighs 200 pounds. It measures 4½ feet from snout to base. Although difficult to lift and carry, the phylactery can be rolled. Any character rolling it moves at a speed of 3 plus his strength damage bonus. No amount of added strength or extra people rolling it can get it moving faster than a rate of 9. Obviously, if it is dropped out a window or rolled down a staircase, its speed would exceed 9.

Only one thing stands in the way of the characters taking the phylactery: the second guardian, a greater guardian daemon. Its lair lies behind the flat wall of this room. The middle 20 feet of this wall is a one-way illusion. From inside the narrow lair, the illusionary section of the wall is invisible. The daemon can clearly see and hear anyone entering the room and prepare its attack.

The daemon's strategy is to wait until the characters' attentions are completely focused on the phylactery. It then rushes out and breathes fire on them. Of course, it is smart enough to take advantage of any unique situations and change its strategy accordingly.

Guardian Daemon (Greater): Int High; AC -1; MV 9, FI 9 (D); HD 10; hp 60; THAC0 10; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10/1d12/1d12; SA fire breath (7d6 dmg, 3/day, 30' × 10' cone); SD hit only by +2 or better weapon, immune to sleep, charm, hold, polymorph, fear, spells, immune to fire and piercing weapons; MR 25%; SZ L (9' tall); ML 18; XP 11,000; AL N(E).

72. Main Keep Roof: This roof is patrolled by two doom guards. Occasionally, Azalin stands at the walls and looks out over his lands. To the north, he can see the road and Il Aluk. To the south is wilderness spotted with peasant villages.

73-76. Azalin's Rooms: These are the archlich's private quarters. Only Skeeve, his imp familiar, and Erasmus, his spirit butler, are allowed in here. Spanning two floors, these rooms are a mockery of everything that Azalin had in life. The lich spends a few hours here about once a week. He cannot stand to be reminded of the creature comforts of life more often than that. Frequently, he will break or destroy something here before storming out.

As mentioned above, Erasmus is a ghostly spirit that serves as Azalin's butler and manservant in these rooms. He keeps everything in order, dusting and cleaning when necessary, lighting the lamps, drawing warm baths, etc.

Erasmus appears to be completely solid and real, but cannot be touched. Physical objects pass right through him. By concentrating, he can move physical objects around, making it look as if his hands are manipulating them.

Erasmus has no desire to harm anyone. He is a slave, bound to Azalin through the powers granted the lich by the demiplane of dread.

Erasmus looks like a stereotypical butler. He is an elderly man with gray hair, and is a bit too wide around the middle. He dresses in black formalwear at all times. Erasmus treats the characters courteously, asking them to wait for "the master" to return. He is repairing a chair when they enter. He knows nothing of value to

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the characters, rarely leaves these rooms, and will not help the characters in any way, other than to offer them tea and biscuits.

73. Azalin's Dining Room: This is a small, elegant dining area. It has a table surrounded by eight chairs and a wine cabinet. A sideboard holds a basket of fresh bread.

74. Azalin's Study: A pair of overstuffed chairs form the centerpiece of this room. A low table sits next to the chairs, a pile of scrolls neatly stacked on it. The scrolls are writs of ownership for meager parcels of land in the hills of Darkon—all in all, quite dull reading. A fireplace and some shelves stand to one side.

75. Azalin's Bedroom: A large canopy bed dominates the room. Twin wardrobe closets hold many types of clothing, both men's and women's. Hanging on the wall is a portrait of a woman (Azalin's dead wife) and a portrait of Irik (his dead son). Both paintings were ripped to shreds by Azalin and then painstakingly sewn back together by Erasmus (on more than one occasion). The stitches are visible at a distance.

76. Azalin's Bath: A huge bathtub forms the centerpiece of this room. Cabinets full of perfumes, soaps, and towels line the walls. The tub is cracked but mortared together.

77. Banshee Tower Attic: This area is occupied only by dusty wooden beams and cobwebs. The banshee is able to enter this attic.

78. King's Watch: This is the highest of all possible watch points in the castle. Like similar lookouts, Azalin is occasionally seen as a dim figure looking out over the landscape. From here, the road is visible to the west and north, leading to Il Aluk, northeast of the castle.

79. Skeeever's Room: Azalin's imp familiar, Skeeever, lives here. Although a stair leads to this room, Skeeever rarely uses it. He usually

just flies in and out of the castle through a convenient window.

This room is a foul waste pit. Imps are not noted for their cleanliness. Piles of refuse and garbage abound. Rats and flies are everywhere.

The ceiling is over 30 feet high, since this room spans two levels. Wooden beams and rafters crisscross the open space, making it an ideal home for a small flying creature like Skeeever. The imp usually sleeps high in these rafters, in a small nest made of mud and bones.

As mentioned earlier, Azalin has granted his imp a special enchantment. By uttering the word "sanctuary," he is instantly teleported to this room. When the characters first escaped Azalin's control, he used this power to evade the naga in the wizard's lab.



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If the characters take time to look over their surroundings, they can spot a road to the north and west of Castle Avernus. The road cuts diagonally southwest to northeast (see the map in the RAVENLOFT® boxed set). Visible from the walls and towers of the castle, but not the grounds, is the city of Il Aluk to the northeast.

Anyone the PCs meet can give them directions to Nevuchar Springs. "Follow the road out of Il Aluk to the east. Travel through the towns of Viaki, Karg, and Maykle. After Maykle, you will have to hire a boat to take you upriver to Nevuchar." There is no road between Maykle and Nevuchar.

Traveling at normal speed, the PCs will need about a day to go from one town to the next. The trip from Maykle to Nevuchar Springs will take two days by boat, or four if the PCs attempt it cross country. Of course, the characters might use magic or forced marches to travel faster.

There is a chance that the characters will attempt to avoid their fates and journey to a different border of Darkon. As long as it is a misty border, the DM can use the conclusion outlined below. He merely needs to alter all references to the tree shrine and any other geographic features.

Il Aluk

This metropolis is a filthy, seedy city. All manner of corruption hides beneath the thin veneer of civilized behavior. Azalin has strict laws that are ruthlessly enforced, but somehow, this has done little to stem the tide

of crime and corruption in the city. If anyone spots the golden skull, there is sure to be an attempt to steal it.

In Il Aluk, the characters can purchase any common supplies they wish. Horses, wagons, and even boats are available.

While the characters are here, occasionally tell them that they hear the soft tread of footsteps following them. Nothing ever happens because of this, but it will enhance their feelings of being followed and chased.

Once they leave Il Aluk, the characters see a dark, winged shape launch into the air from the city's high towers. It turns and heads south, away from the city.

Viaki

No encounters take place here unless the characters act with extreme stupidity. The townsfolk treat them with courtesy, but are somewhat wary.

During their trip to Karg, the characters see a black winged shape flying overhead. PCs with particularly sharp eyes can spot a figure riding it. If they watch it for a while, it appears to be flying back and forth as if searching. It is Azalin astride his shadow dragon Ebb. He is following the progress of the characters while pretending to search for them.

Karg

This city is the base of the infamous Kargat, Azalin's secret police. A rough map of Karg can be found in the RAVENLOFT® boxed set.

While the PCs are in this city, the DM should inform them occasionally that they feel a malevolent presence watching them. This raises the hairs on the backs of their necks, but otherwise has no effect. Azalin is using Kargat vampires to follow the characters, but they are under strict instructions to avoid all contact.

As long as the characters remain in the upper city (the northern portion) and keep a low profile, everything will be fine. The prices of food and lodging are double those listed in the

CULMINATION

Player's Handbook in this area of the city.

The lower city has more reasonable prices, but it is the stalking ground of the vampires of Karg. If the characters do anything truly foolish, a vampire attacks them. Not all the vampires in Karg are aware of Azalin's orders, and some that are under his orders don't care.

Mayhle

This small settlement is of little interest to the characters. The people of this sleepy town are wary of strangers. The inn will offer them lodging and the shopkeepers will serve them, but there is no chance of engaging the townsfolk in any extended conversation.

As the characters make their way toward Nevuchar Springs, they see a large, black, winged shape flying low to the ground. A human figure can be seen astride it. The characters may wish to hide upon seeing it. They can hide just in time before the inky black shadow of the dragon passes overhead. As before, this is Azalin astride Ebb, keeping tabs on the party. He will not attack them.

Nevuchar Springs

Reaching this town is the PCs' goal. This is a small community of elves who rarely see outsiders. The citizens are courteous, but cautious. As long as the characters treat them with respect and kindness, the elves will act the same. The elves will tell the player characters about the shrine of Nevuchar and its location if they ask.

The shrine is a huge tree at the edge of the everpresent mists, a few miles east of town. The tree grows on a small island in the center of the Vuchar River. The river is only 50 feet wide from bank to bank at this point.

The rocky island is a 20-foot-wide, 75-foot-long wedge. If the PCs are on foot, they must cross 15 feet of water (10 feet deep at the center).

Once the skull is 30 feet from the island (on the riverbank or downstream from the island),

Azalin attacks. He arrived in the area well before the characters and has been preparing ever since. Since he knows that he wants the characters to win this battle and destroy his body, the lich will not use his power to *animate* or *summon undead*. He has sent Ebb back to Castle Avernus. He has left all of his magical items behind as well. This battle will simply be Azalin against the PCs in a direct contest of power.

The DM must remember that Azalin wants the PCs to believe that *they* have destroyed him so he can send his life essence into the phylactery. The archlich knows that it takes only one of them to carry his phylactery through the mists. Azalin will fight ferociously. He is willing to kill all but one of the party members. Their lives mean nothing to him, as long as at least one of them survives. He considers it a point of honor to kill as many of them as possible before they destroy him.

When Azalin makes his presence known, a number of spells are in effect (see table below) for the indicated durations. The first duration number assumes that his imp familiar is still alive, and that Azalin is therefore an 18th-level wizard. The second number assumes that the imp has been killed and Azalin has been reduced to a 14th-level wizard.

Azalin's *contingency* spell will trigger a *magic jar* on himself if his body makes contact with his phylactery. This results in his life essence being forced into the phylactery and his skeletal body becoming a simple, unanimated corpse.

Spell	Remaining Duration
<i>True seeing</i>	16/12 rounds
<i>Eyebite</i>	6/4 rounds
<i>Stoneskin</i>	Until first attack
<i>Contingency</i>	Until he touches the phylactery

Azalin is invisible when he creeps within 60 feet of the characters and casts *prismatic wall*. The scintillating wall stretches 360 feet to either side of him and into the sky—a nearly impassable barrier. If Azalin is only a 14th-level

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wizard, he cannot cast *prismatic wall* (see below).

Read the following passage if Skeeve is still alive and Azalin is an 18th-level wizard.

Ahead of you is a small island in the river, long and narrow. In its center is a large oak tree. Strange designs and odd glyphs are carved into the bark of its trunk. Just beyond the tree are the swirling, eddying mists.

Hearing a noise, you spin around to look behind you. A wall of multicolored, scintillating lights stretches as far as the eye can see to either side, and higher than the tallest castle tower. It completely blocks off the path on which you came. Azalin steps through the pulsing, swirling wall of light. With a voice from beyond the grave, the lich intones, "You have that which is rightfully mine. Return it and I will only kill you. Refuse, and your fate will be far worse."

If Skeeve is dead, Azalin casts a *wall of stone* instead. He places it in a circle around the trunk of the tree shrine. It becomes a circular wall about 10 feet in diameter and 10 feet high. Regardless of which spell he casts, his *invisibility* spell is undone.

Read the passage below if Skeeve is dead and Azalin is a 14th-level wizard.

Ahead of you is a small island in the river, long and narrow. In its center is a large oak tree. Strange designs and odd glyphs are carved into the bark of its trunk. Just beyond the tree are swirling, eddying mists, obliterating your view.

Hearing a noise, you spin around to look behind you. Azalin stands on the bank, just finishing an incantation. Suddenly the trunk of the tree shrine is surrounded by a stone wall. With a voice from beyond the grave, the lich intones, "You have that which is rightfully mine. Return it and I will only kill you. Refuse, and your fate will be far worse."

Azalin does not use any of the brilliant strategies or tactics that he is fully capable of engineering. Instead, he merely blasts away at the characters while attempting to get to the phylactery. Any character who tries to move the phylactery will receive full and dire attention.

Once he gets to his phylactery, Azalin stands with his back to it and always attacks the character nearest him. If anyone tries to knock him into the skull, the DM should roll a saving throw to see if he avoided being knocked down, but it will automatically fail. Azalin will let himself be knocked into his phylactery. If the battle ends this way, read the passage below.

Azalin touches the golden surface of the dragon skull. Suddenly, a yellow aura of magical energy surrounds the lich. His bones begin to rattle and shake. A wispy tendril of white vapor escapes from his mouth and traces a path toward the eye sockets of the dragon skull. The sight of this strange, seeping mist makes your skin crawl. The skull seems to absorb the mist, and the skeletal body of Azalin falls to the ground in a heap. The skull seems different now. Its toothy grin is more malevolent, and the gaze of its ruby eyes is more penetrating.

If the characters defeat him in normal combat, read this passage.

Azalin's smoldering corpse lies motionless on the ground. The air is still, as if the wind itself were anticipating some climactic event. As you watch, a wispy white vapor rises slowly up from the body and winds its way to the golden dragon skull. The sight of this strange vapor trail makes the hairs on your neck stand on end. The vapor seeks out the eye sockets of the golden skull and vanishes within their blood-red depths. The skull seems different now. Its toothy grin is more malevolent, its ruby eyes more penetrating.

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Azalin (lich, 18th-level or 14th-level): Int Genius; AC 0; MV 12; HD 11; hp 54; THAC0 10; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SA paralytic touch, spells; SD hit only by +1 or better weapon, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *enfeeblement*, *hold*, *polymorph*, *fear*, *insanity*, *mind-affecting*, and *death* spells, immune to cold and electricity, regenerate 1 hp/round (if imp is alive); SZ M (6' tall); MR 25% or none; ML 18; XP 9,000 or 7,000; AL LE.

Spells if Skeeever is dead (5/5/5/4/4/2/1): *charm person*, *enlarge*, *magic missile* (×2), *phantasmal force*; *darkness* 15' radius, *invisibility*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *scare*, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*; *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt*, *suggestion*; *dimension door*, *ice storm*, *phantasmal killer*, *stoneskin*; *chaos*, *domination*, *telekinesis*, *wall of stone*; *eyebite*, *true seeing*; *power word stun*.

Add these if Skeeever lives (5/5/5/5/5/3/3/2): *minor globe of invulnerability*; *passwall*; *flesh to stone*; *forcecage*, *teleport without error*; *incendiary cloud*, *prismatic wall*; *energy drain*.

Conclusion

There are two different endings for this adventure, depending on whether the DM intends to use the sequel to this adventure, *Roots of Evil*. If the sequel is *not* going to be played, then Azalin's plot fails. If the sequel is going to be played, then the archlich's plot succeeds.

Adventure Ends Here . . .

A slight chill passes over you. Looking around, you realize that the mists from behind the tree shrine are flowing over your group, shrouding everything in damp whiteness. A figure seems to be forming from the mists, directly above the golden dragon skull. In a moment, you see the ghost

of Hyskosa seated upon the skull's gleaming surface. The icy fingers of the supernatural slither across your skin.

"You have foiled the plot of the archlich and saved an unsuspecting world from a horrifying fate. This is an in-between place, and I can tell you of things that were not permitted for you to know before.

"Azalin used all of you as pawns in a great game of his. After sending you back in time to witness the fall of Strahd Von Zarovich, he realized that removing the Holy Symbol of Ravenkind from the castle would weaken the laws of this land. The lich then devised a scheme to exploit that weakness.

"Knowing that I languished in his prison, Azalin set you free, which has proven to be his undoing. He knew of the prophecy, but did not comprehend the fullness of it. Azalin then let you steal his phylactery, the storehouse of his precious life essence. He watched you and protected you as you carried it here, to the edge of his world.

"Azalin then confronted and fought with you, but showed only a fraction of his true power. Had he truly wanted to destroy you, he would have done so in the blink of an eye. Even in death, he remained victorious as his life essence flowed from his undead body and into his phylactery. All that remained was for you to carry it through these mists to the strange new worlds that lie beyond. Had that happened, he would have been unleashed upon an innocent world.

"My last act before I take my eternal rest is to return the dragon skull to the lands of Darkon. The mists shall not have it. Azalin will be reborn, but within this realm. Here he is and here he shall remain. The Grand Conjunction of my prophecy, for which I have sacrificed everything, will be dead. I know not where these mists will take you, but I hope that it is into the lands of sunshine.

"Help me to push the skull into the water, for I cannot move it myself."

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Once the characters push the skull into the water, it floats slowly downstream. Something so heavy should have sunk immediately. However, the characters can see the shade of Hyskosa riding it through the water.

The mists of Ravenloft transport the characters to wherever the DM wishes them to go, even back to their own world. Within three days, Azalin will have animated a new body within the castle. He will brood there for some time, hatching new plots and planning his vengeance. If Skeevers died, Azalin will need some time to conjure up a new imp familiar using his *wish* spell. He will use more *wishes* to regain his lost levels. All of Darkon will hear his shriek when once again he is denied increasing his power beyond 18th level, even through a *wish* spell.

Adventure Continues in Roots of Evil . . .

A slight chill passes over you. Looking around, you realize that the mists from behind the tree shrine are flowing over your group, shrouding everything in damp whiteness. A figure seems to form from the mists, directly above the golden dragon skull. In a few moments, you see the ghost of Hyskosa seated upon its gleaming surface. The icy fingers of the supernatural slither across your skin.

"My time here is short. This is an in-between place, and I can tell you of things that were not permitted for you to know before.

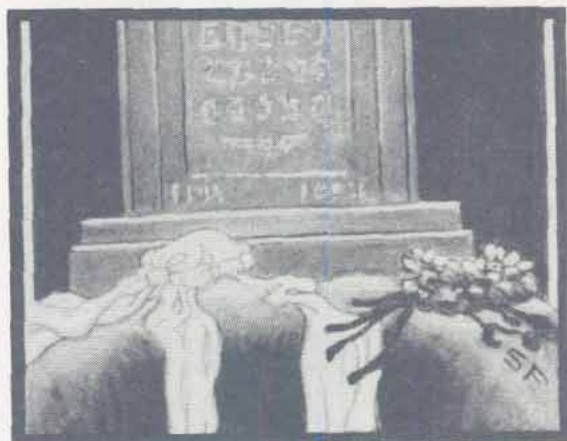
"Azalin has used all of you as pawns in a great game of his. After sending you back in time to witness the fall of Strahd Von Zarovich, he realized that removing the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* from the castle would weaken the laws of this land. The lich then devised a scheme by which he could exploit that weakness.

"Knowing that I languished in his prison, Azalin set you free, which has proved to be his undoing. He knew of the prophecy, but did not comprehend the fullness of it. Azalin then let you steal his phylactery, the storehouse of his precious life essence. He watched you and protected you as you carried it here, to the edge of the world.

"Azalin then confronted and fought with you, but showed only a fraction of his true power. Had he truly wanted to destroy you, he would have done so in the blink of an eye. Even in death, he remained victorious as his life essence flowed from his undead body into his phylactery.

"Now he has escaped from the lands of Darkon. I know not where you go, but if there is any decency in your veins, save that place from the horror of what lives inside this golden dragon skull. My task is over and I go to my eternal rest. Your task is still before you. Find a way to destroy this thing of evil."

When the mists part, the characters are in a bright, sunny countryside. The golden dragon skull lies beside them. It seems to grin with cold satisfaction at the fresh, new world around them. What happens next can be discovered only within the pages of *Roots of Evil*.



BOOK OF FIRAN ZAL'HONAN

Firan Zal'honan was born of noble blood on the third starday of Sunsebb in 231 CY. The second son of Earl Turalitan Zal'honan, lord of the township of Knurl, he had no place in his father's house. His brother stood to inherit both his title and lands.

Upon his 15th birthing day, he chose to apprentice himself to the wizard Quantarius. It is said that he gladly left his sire's house, cursing him with every breath.

In magic, Firan excelled. He found a cold joy in wielding its great power. For 29 years, he served Quantarius, learning the mystic arts. When he was released from his apprenticeship, he went to Rauxes. In that great city, he honed his skill.

Firan was in Rauxes several years when the Warden of Knurl sent for him. His father had died while he was still studying under Quantarius, although no word of it had been sent to him. His older brother had been ruling Knurl for the last 13 years. Now, he too was dead, having eaten himself into an oversized, early grave. The Warden begged Firan, as the only surviving Zal'honan heir, to return to Knurl and claim his inheritance. Firan accepted.

The townsfolk called him Azal' Lan, meaning wizard-king in Old Oeridian. He swore fealty to the Malachite Throne in 283 CY. He was noted for his loyalty to Knurl and his harsh demands of its loyalty to him. The Azal' Lan's word was considered as good as a written contract.

Firan married Olessa in 290 CY. It was a loveless union, born of politics. It took her 18 years to bear him a child, a son whom he named Irik. Olessa died birthing him and cursing Firan.

On Irik's 19th birthing day, Firan had Irik publicly beheaded, wielding the blade himself. He declared publicly that his own son was unfit to rule in his stead.

Legend has it that a shadow lord of darkness came to Firan on the night of Irik's funeral. It offered him a secret held by few mortals: the secret of the lich. If this tale were true, two years would be required to complete the necromantic rituals, a task Firan gladly accepted.

Firan never revealed his true, undead nature to his people, but they could sense the change. He publicly changed his title to Azal' Lan, which the people had been calling him for years.

As a ruler, Azal' Lan was noted for extremities. He was noted for his unshakable honor and for never breaking his word, regardless of the cost. He was intolerant of criminals, and his punishments were legendary throughout the region. Knurl prospered under his iron grip, never suspecting that they harbored an undead monster.

In the year 342 CY, Azal' Lan annexed the Teesar valley where Knurl lay. To his credit, in the years that followed, Azal' Lan fiercely defended his lands and people against the barbarians of the north and the Bone March. He gave his people the same unwavering loyalty that he demanded from them.

In 372 CY, he expanded his fief to include the southern spur of the Flinty Hills, the southern tip of the Blemu Hills, and that portion of the Adri Forest that lay within two days' ride of its edge. The dwarves and gnomes of the Flinty Hills rebelled almost immediately, and were hideously punished for it. In the years that followed, he renounced his allegiance to the Malachite Throne and marched upon the city of Innspa in the year 391 CY.

The Nyronese were outraged at Azal' Lan's incursions into their newly formed nation. Rather than send in an army, they hired a powerful band of mercenaries. These men infiltrated Azal' Lan's castle in an attempt to destroy the lich. Despite his tremendous powers of magic, the mercenaries proved too much for him. Azal' Lan fled.

Two days out of Knurl, the mercenaries were still hot on his trail. A mist arose in the morning. Thinking nothing of it, the lich silently moved through the morning fog. He utterly vanished from that place and entered into a new land, in a new reality, where he has remained ever since. The people of Darkon call him Azalin, a twisted derivation of his true title.

Note found in Azalin's Book in the Hall of Records

Trik is a disappoint. Flesh of my flesh, the only fruit of my seed, my son is nevertheless unfit. I tried to teach him how to rule. The people must obey their ruler! It is the natural order of things. Those who do not obey must be punished swiftly and publicly so that all will know the consequences of disobedience. The common folk are like children. They must be constantly cared for, lest they run astray. They must be disciplined regularly. Trik was always too soft-hearted. He wanted to give food to the hungry and clothes to the poor. His judgements were based upon forgiveness, not the rule of law.

Trik is unfit to rule Knur. I had no choice. I have seen 96 winters, and there will be no other heirs in the Zal'honan line. If I were to die before him, he would spoil the people and bring down all the fruits of my labor. I had to execute him. Animals in the wild always kill the young of their litter that are unfit. I simply did the same. I did do the right thing. I DID do the right thing! I did!

Furan Zal'honan, Azal'han of Knur

Notes found in the Hall of Life

4.585: I have cloned the flesh of the mercenaries. At maturity, all of them went mad. Before destroying the clones, I tortured them to determine their pain thresholds, which were impressively high. Maybe the next group will fair better.

5.585: The second batch of clones has survived longer than the first. I believe that keeping the original heads in a remote sealed location is the key. Unfortunately, none of them survived the journey to the time of Strahd's origin.

6.585: The third lot survived the transference! But let them be damned — their minds went mad upon arriving in the past.

7.585: I have found the key! I have cloned only the heads! Separated from their bodies has weakened the psychic link and prevented them from going mad. I sent them back several times to remove the Holy Symbol of Ravenkind from Von Zarovich's castle. Now, if I can find the symbol in the present, I can destroy him forever! I shall destroy these clones when I return, for they know too much. The next set of clones can be used for more interesting things.

F. Z.

CASTLE RAVENLOFT RECORD SHEET

Trip Number: _____

Round	Strahd Von Zarovich	PC #1 _____	PC #2 _____	PC #3 _____	PC #4 _____	PC #5 _____	PC #6 _____
6) Action Movement	Crash into chapel, kill priest. R51 to R40						
7) Action Movement	Kill acolytes, icon flies across room. Stay in R40						
8) Action Movement							
9) Action Movement							
10) Action Movement							
11) Action Movement							
12) Action Movement							
13) Action Movement							
14) Action Movement							

Record movement using the row and column designators on the Castle Ravenloft map.
The example in round one shows Strahd moving from R51 to R40.

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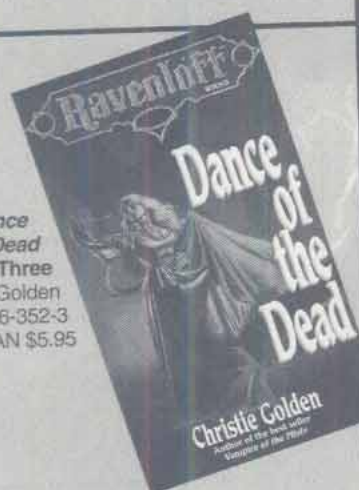
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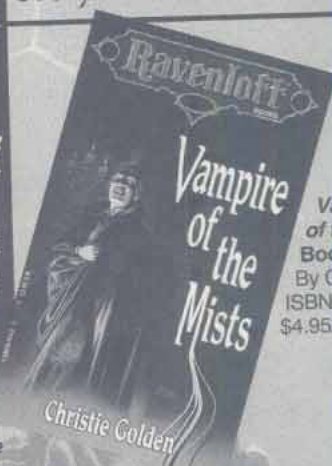
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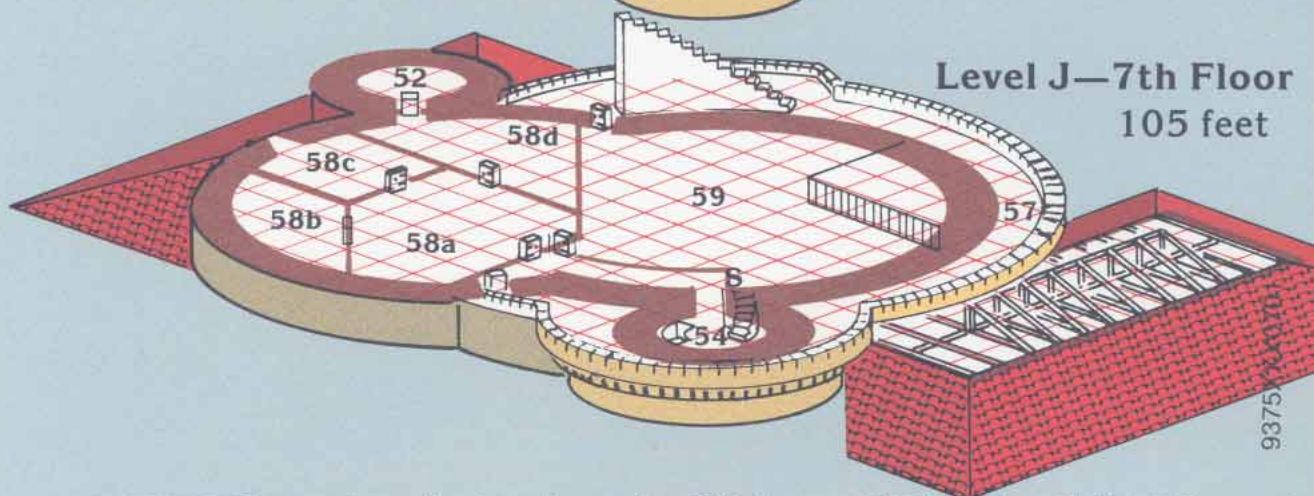
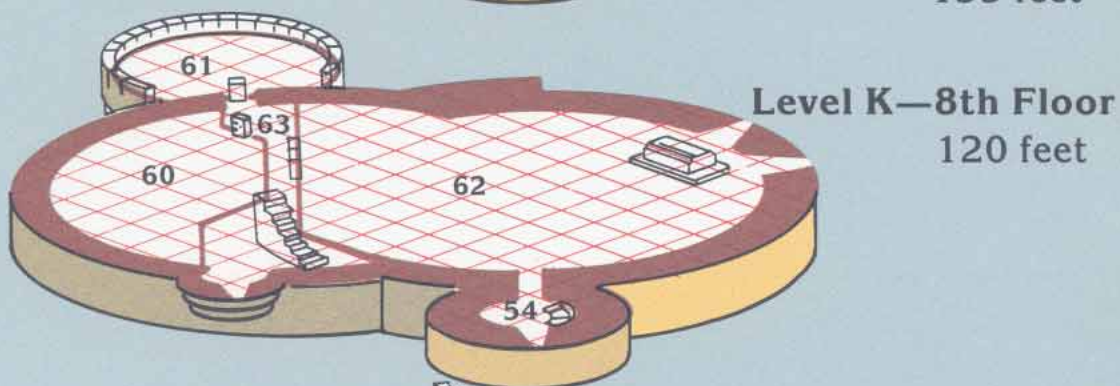
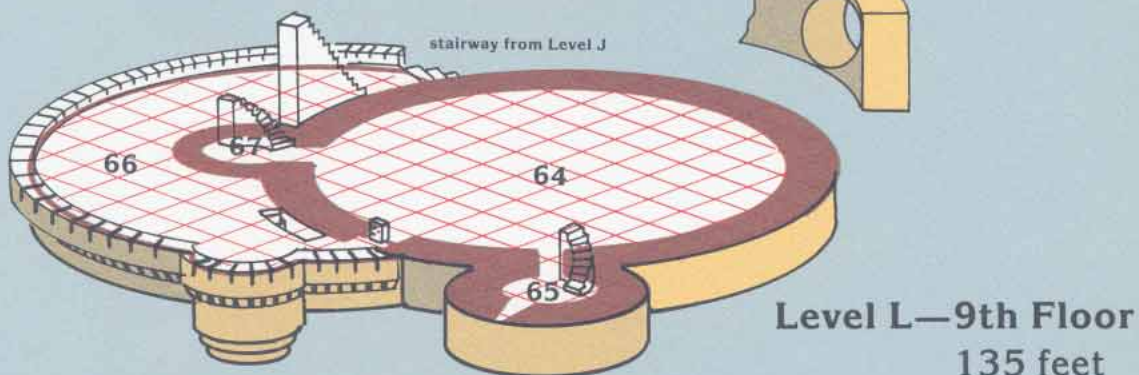
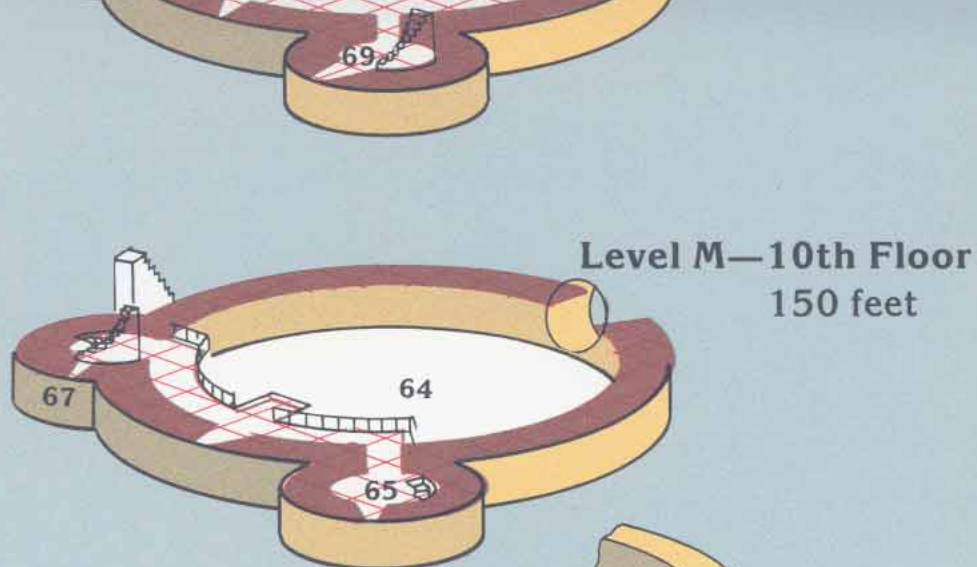


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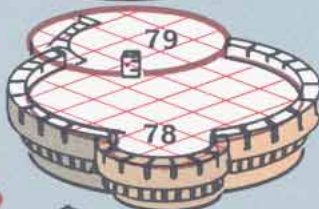




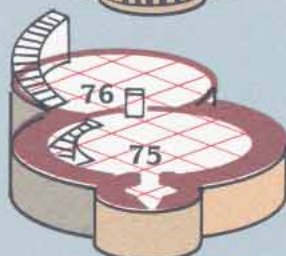
255 feet



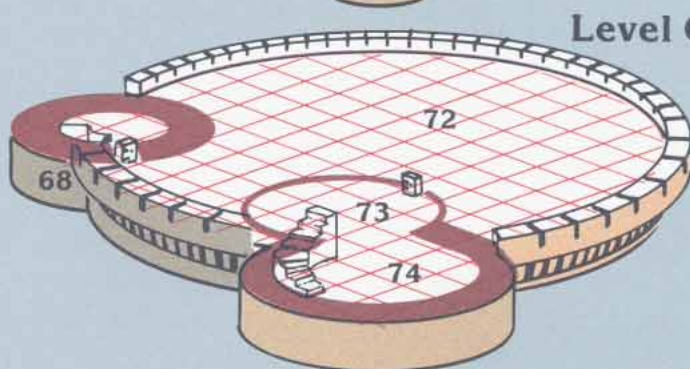
240 feet



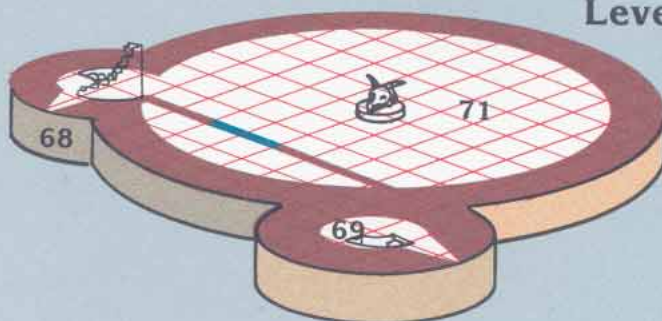
Level S—15th Floor
225 feet



Level R—14th Floor
210 feet



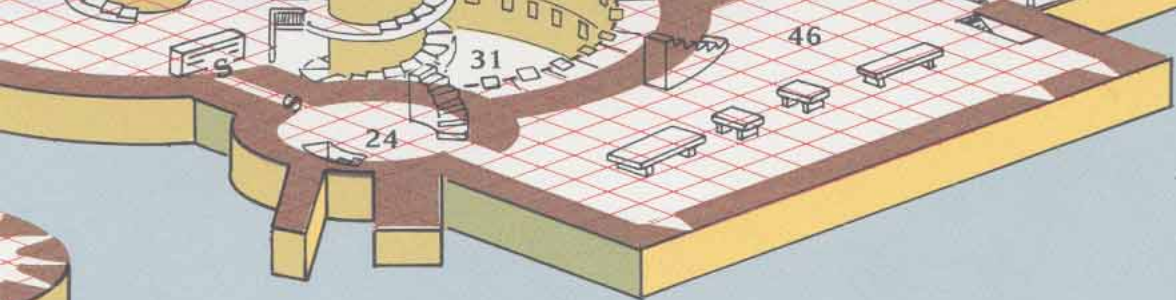
Level Q—13th Floor
195 feet



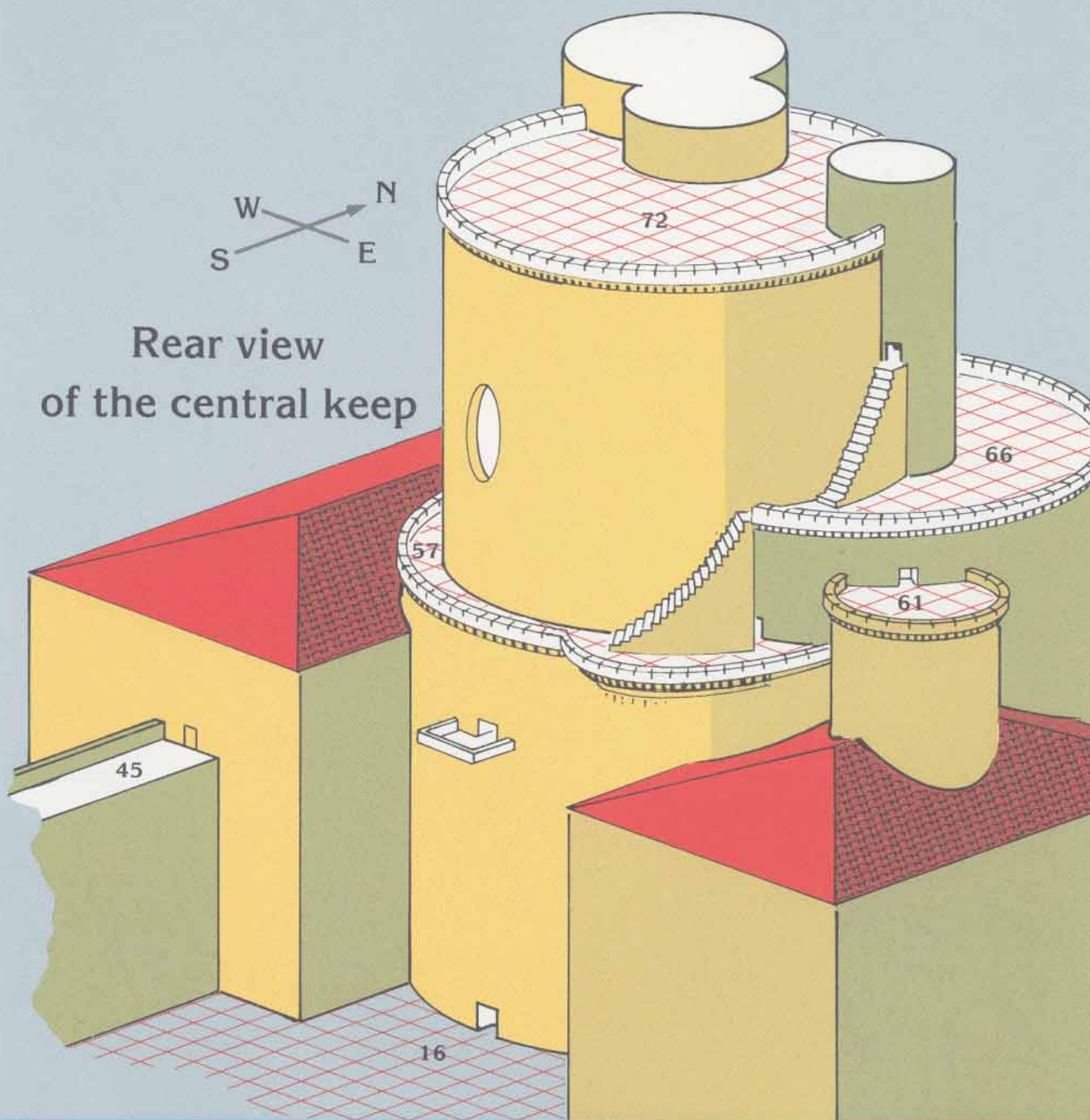
Level P—12th Floor
180 feet



Level N—11th Floor
165 feet

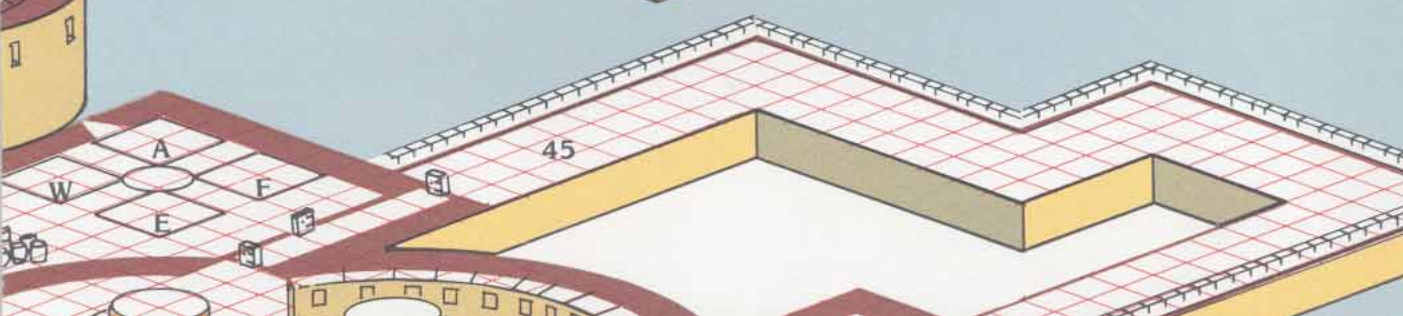
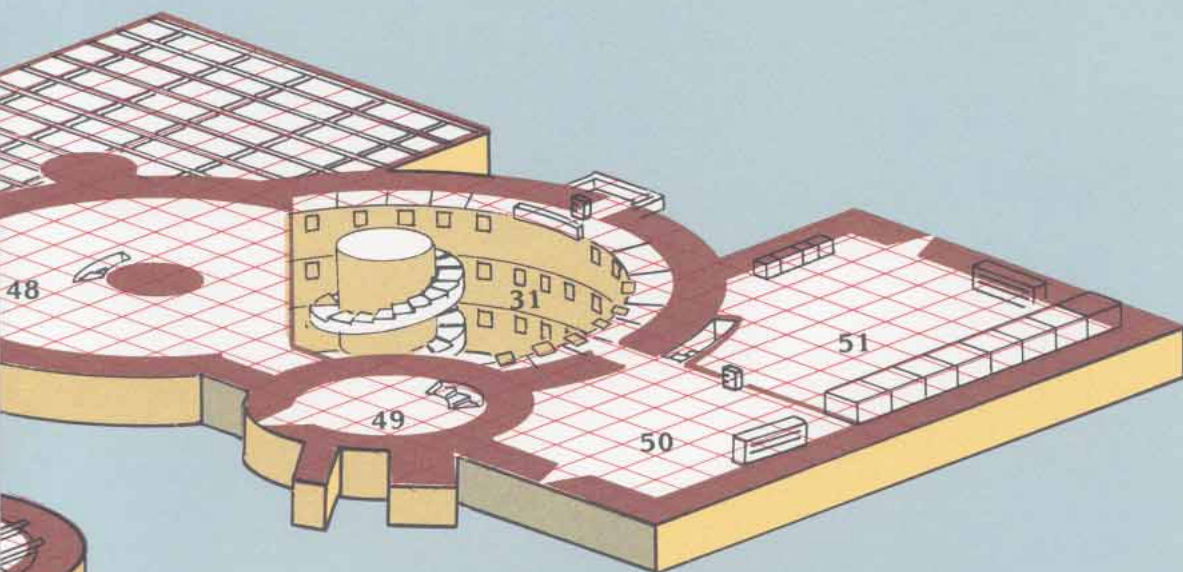
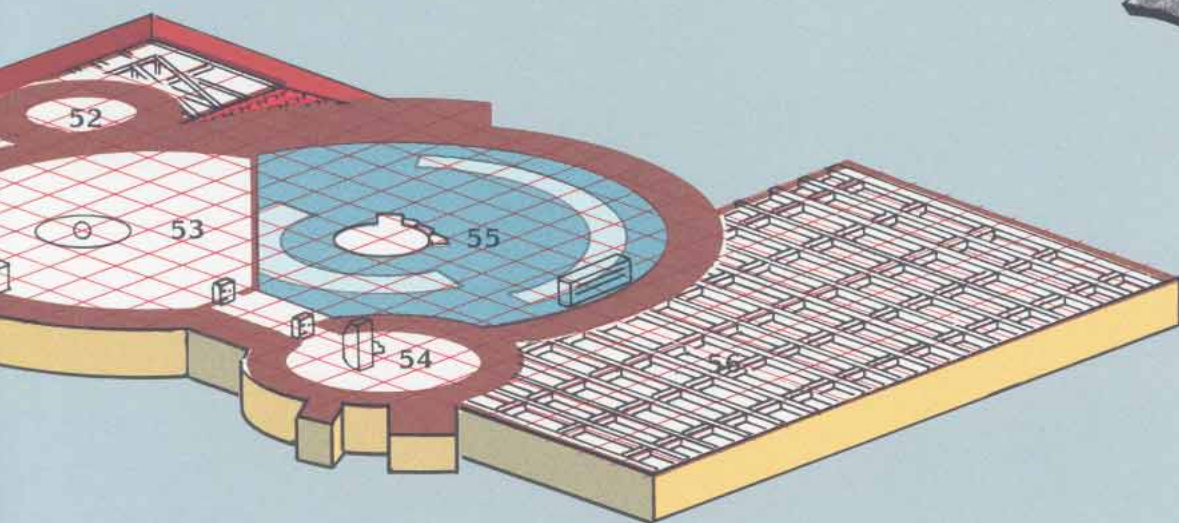


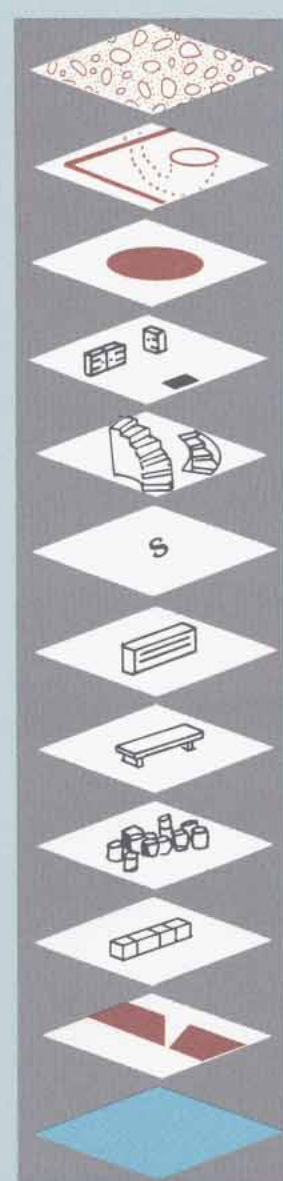
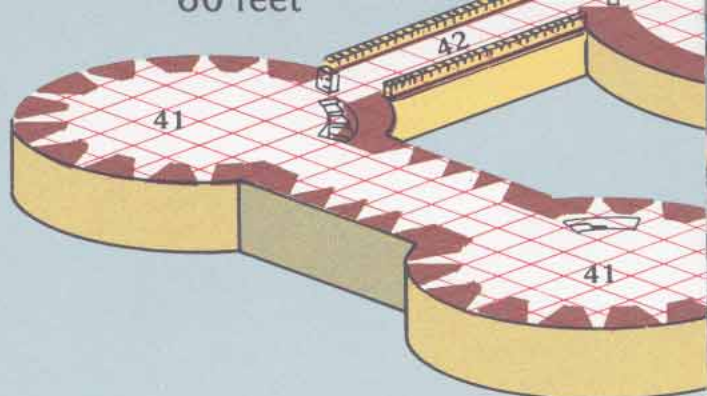
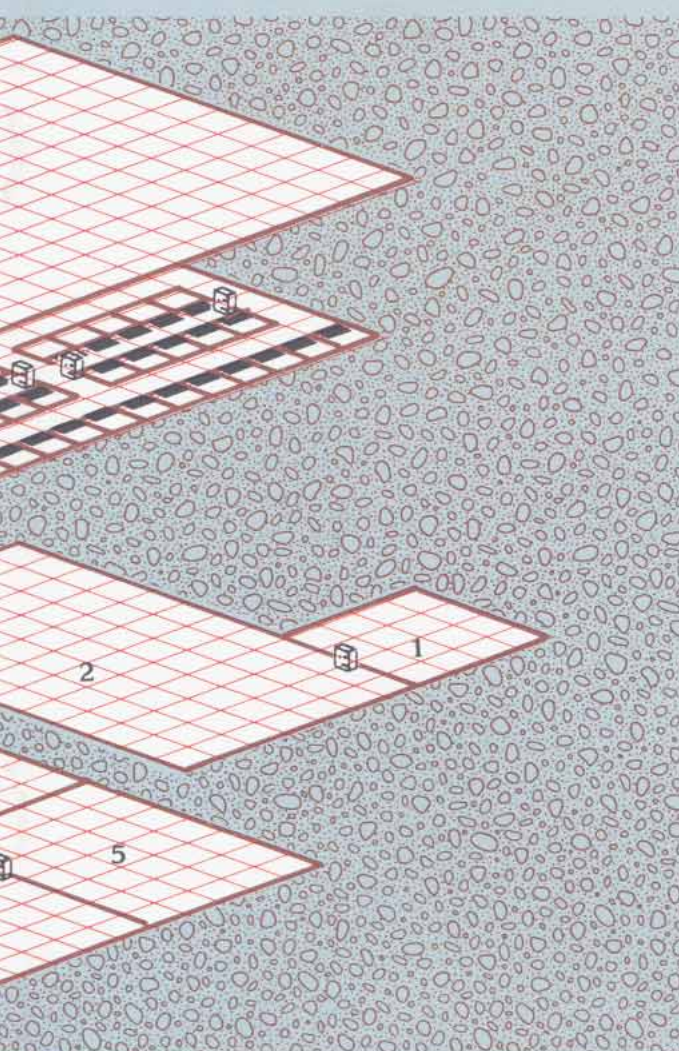
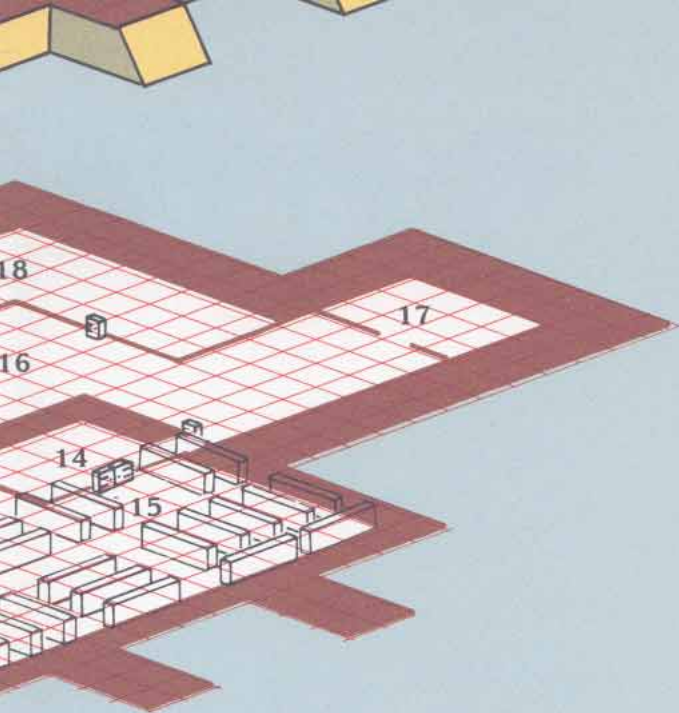
Rear view
of the central keep



VERNUS

= 10 feet





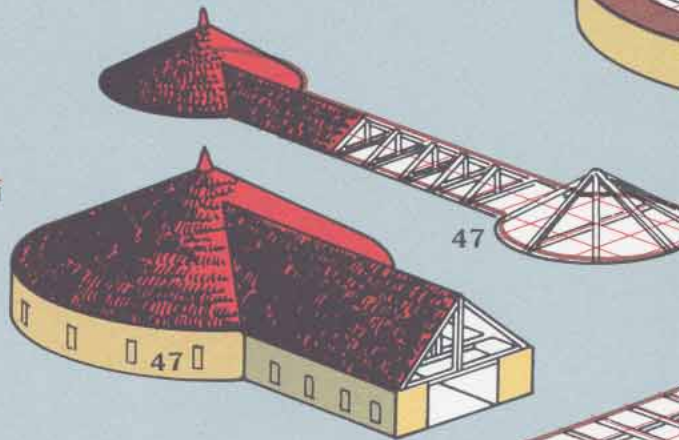
- Solid Stone
- Tunnel
- Pillar
- Door
- Stairs
- Secret Door
- Shelf
- Table
- Barrels
- Cages
- Arrow Slit
- Illusory Wall

CASTLE A

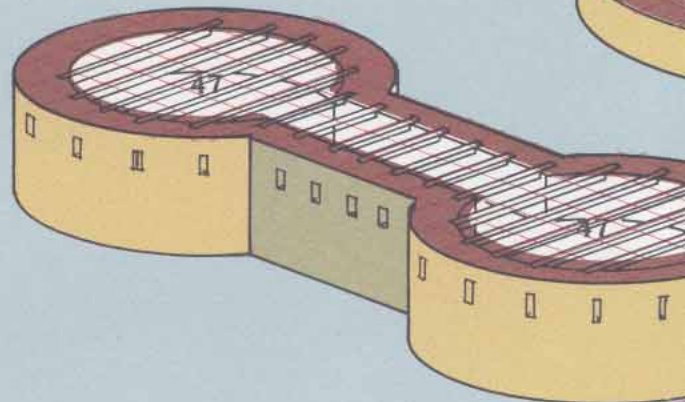
One square



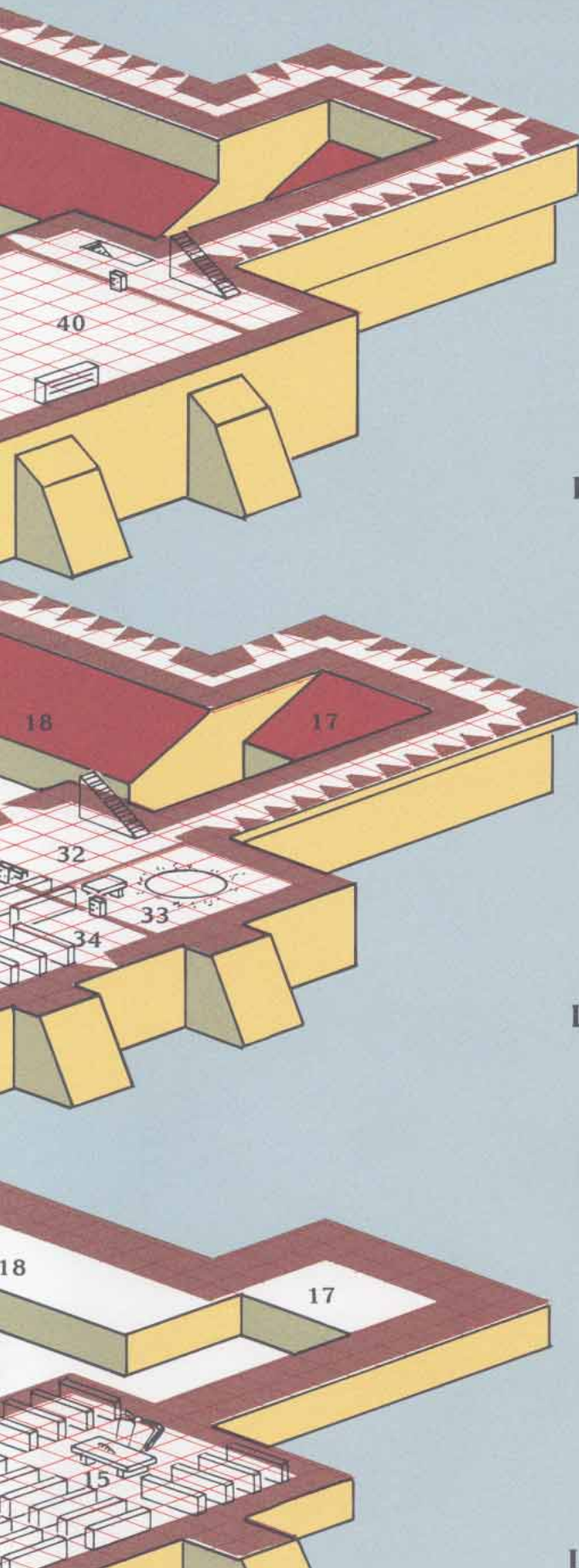
Level I—6th Floor
90 feet



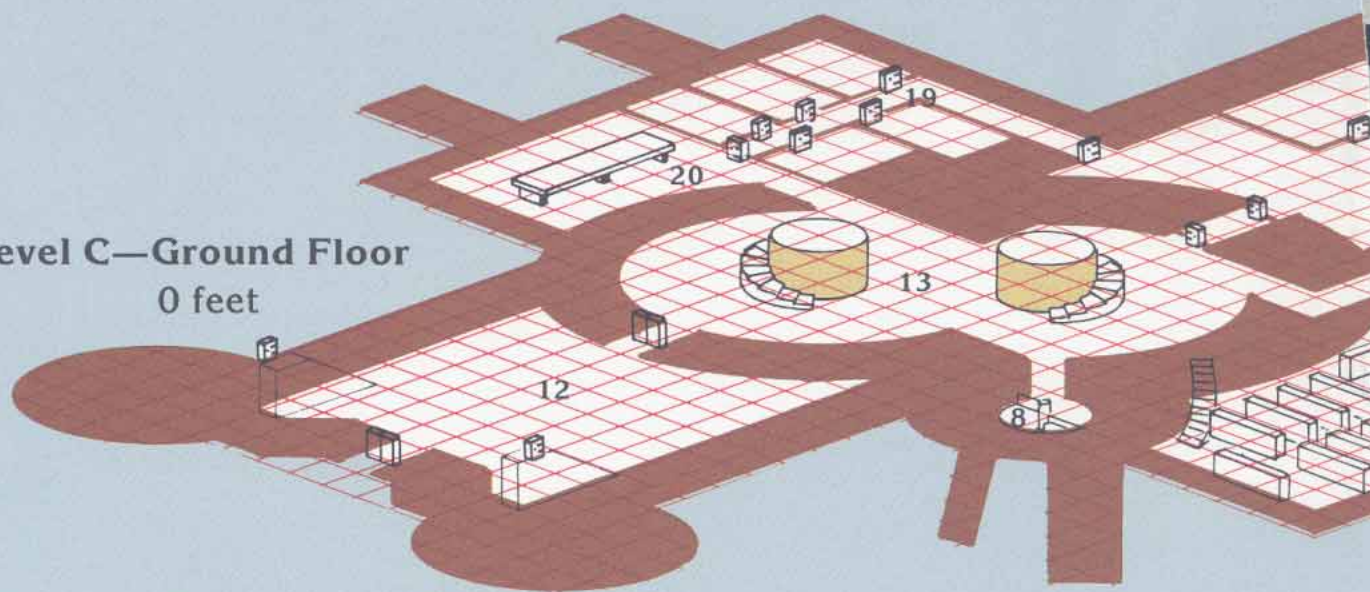
Level H—5th Floor
75 feet



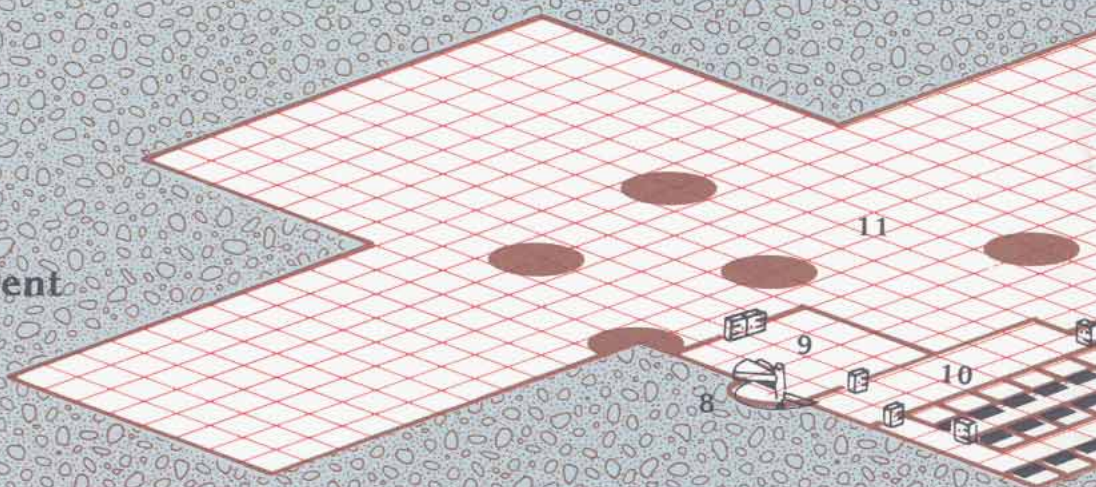
Level G—4th Floor



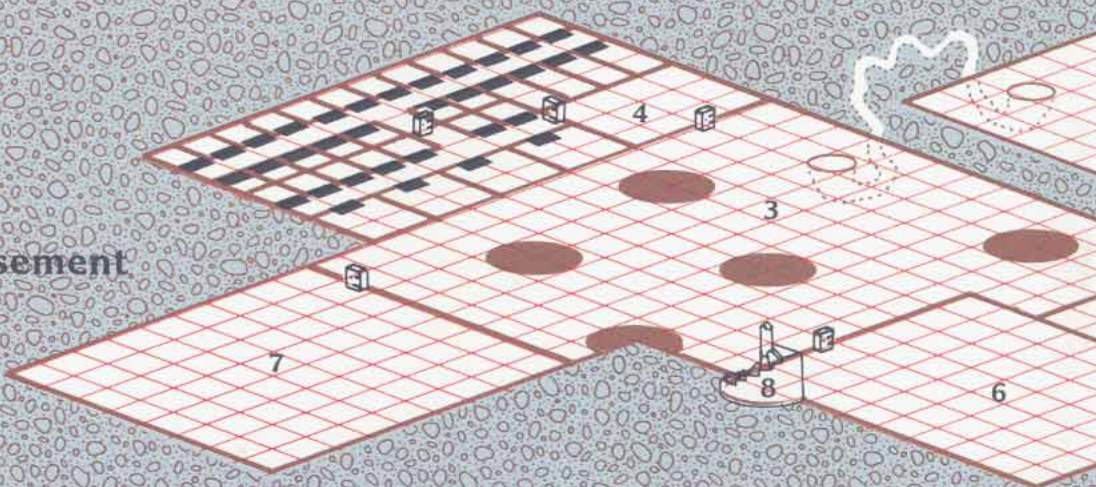
Level C—Ground Floor
0 feet



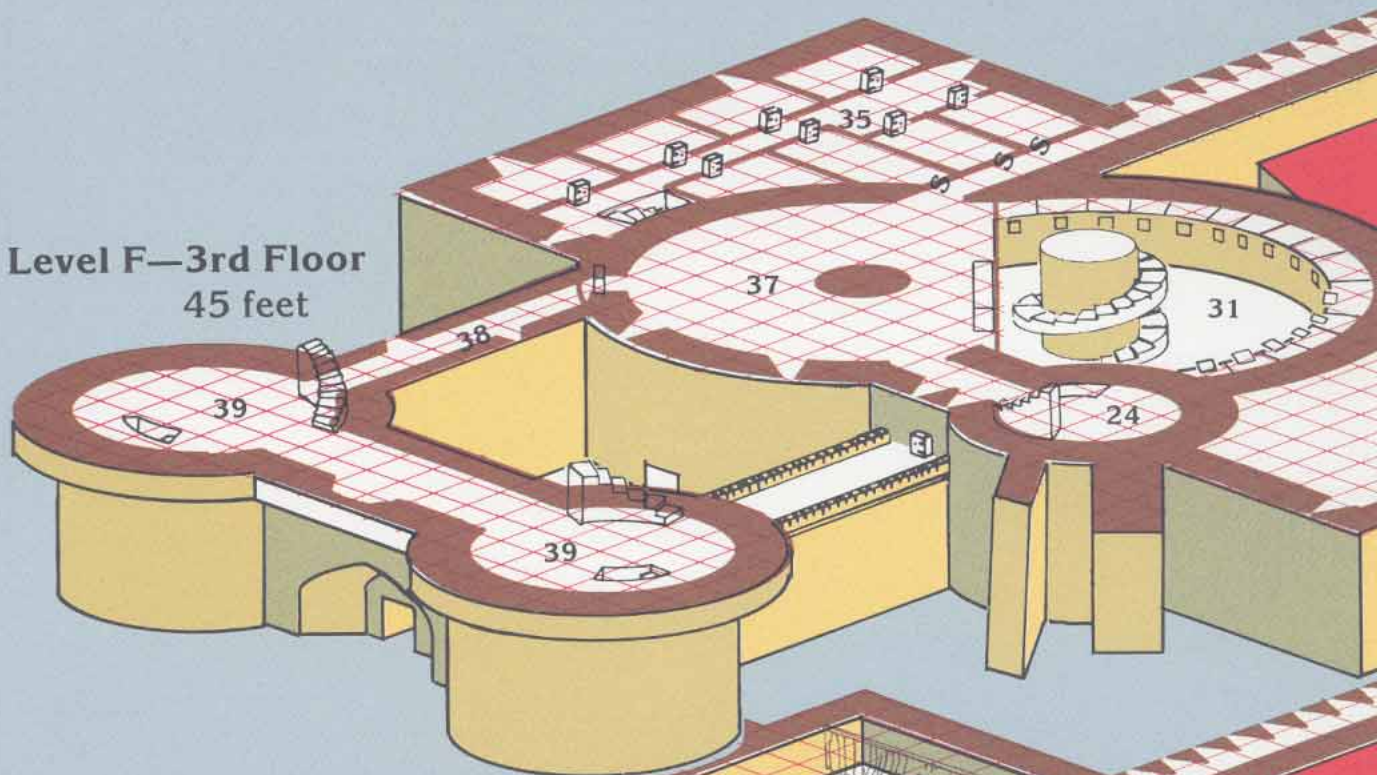
Level B—Basement
-15 feet



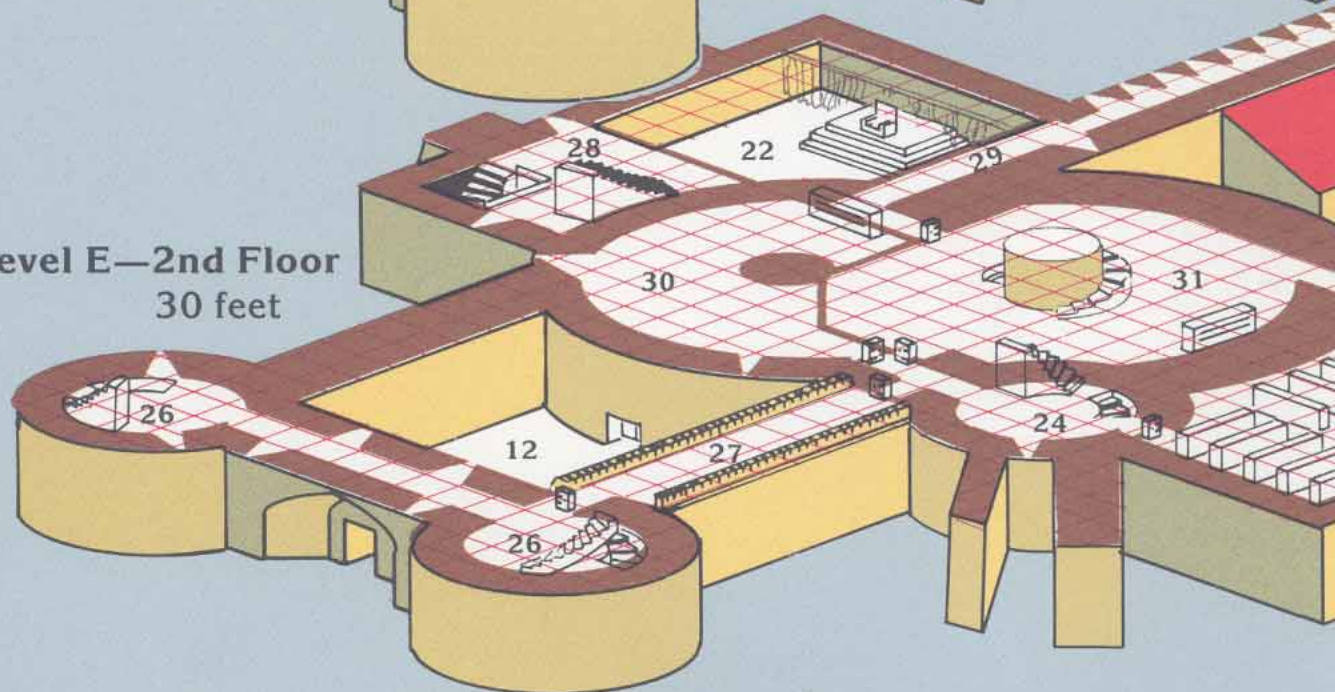
Level A—Subbasement
-30 feet



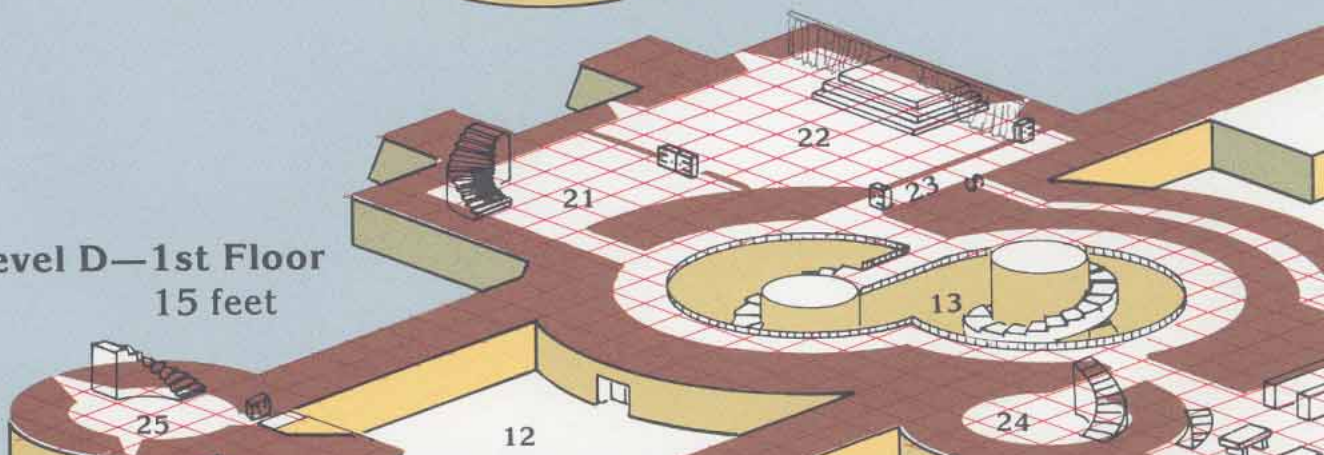
Level F—3rd Floor
45 feet



Level E—2nd Floor
30 feet



Level D—1st Floor
15 feet



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FROM THE SHADOWS

By Bruce Nesmith

Deep beneath the foundation stones of Castle Avernus, Azalin the lich hatches his plots. The grand conjunction is coming, when all the lands and lords of Ravenloft will be set free upon the realms of man. Azalin does not intend to let this opportunity slip by. All he needs are a few dead bodies. Fortunately, there is a party of adventurers nearby. . . .

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